



Roman Reflections

IRON AGE TO VIKING AGE IN NORTHERN EUROPE

Klavs Randsborg



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Roman Reflections

Iron Age to Viking Age in Northern Europe

Klavs Randsborg

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Preface

This slim volume contains five very detailed and deeply researched studies on the Iron Age and Viking Age in Northern Europe, looking in particular at aspects involving links with and impact from Roman society. The studies are mutually supportive and therefore overlap to some extent.

First and foremost, the studies are surprising in several respects, and this is the reason for publishing them in book format rather than as separate articles. Certainly, one of the best things about archaeology is the riddles it asks us to solve.

The first study deals with the fascinating so-called bog bodies of the late first millennium BC, a classical archaeological puzzle: murdered men, women and children, yet shown respect in death and often found with items of fine clothing. A novel hypothesis of the bog bodies as killed hostages is presented.

The second study challenges traditional ideas about the Cimbri, a mirage in European and Nordic history and in archaeology often linked with Denmark, or in fact with Jylland/Jutland – the ‘Cimbrian Peninsula’ to the Romans – and in particular the northern district of Himmerland (traditionally read as ‘Kimber Land’) with the find of the famous Gundestrup silver cauldron, a startling European artefact.

The third study is an archaeologically founded ‘modernist’ discussion of the ‘ethnography’ of Tacitus’ *Germania*, in particular the character of ancient Germanic Bronze and Iron Age society: did this consist of chiefdoms or cooperations – was it elitist or egalitarian in organization and ideology? It was at any rate sceptical of the southern neighbours.

The fourth study is a linguistic tour de force, geographical in nature, and suggesting that most of the names of places and nations in

Northern Europe mentioned by the classical authors are vulgar renderings of mostly Latin words, often with a twist of humour, such as Codanus Sea, stemming from Coda/Cauda, meaning an animal tail. Only a few names seem to be based on local terms. In turn, the Latin names were accepted by the Northerners and have thus continued in history as false confirmations.

In the fifth study, the long timeline of knowledge on the ‘Danes’ throughout the first millennium AD is discussed: the meagre and uncertain written sources but ever growing archaeological data, however ‘tacit’ the latter remains. Still, the linguistic evidence deserves further scrutiny, as has already been indicated. Thus, traditional sources and history are presented here in conjunction with new archaeological observations and interpretations: from Roman reflections to Roman shadows, perhaps.

The sixth contribution is both a summary and a lighthouse, a beacon shining towards Denmark and the North of the following High Middle Ages.

It is the hope of the author that the idea of presenting these contributions in and as one volume will help promote fruitful debates based on the greater momentum of knowledge from many different sources and academic areas, philology, ancient history, regional history – the bases of traditional knowledge – as well as modern archaeology. Indeed, progress in research is very often created by informed tours of other academic subjects.

Such are also some of the more joyful exercises in academics: debates being fed by greater dangers – and new certainty.

Marija Gimbutiene [Gimbutas] *in memoriam*.

K.R.

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Danish and foreign institutions and scholars have in various ways contributed generously to the present volume. Dr Phil. Allan A. Lund has been a very useful sparring partner regarding Tacitus. Other colleagues have permitted use of illustrations and/or provided information, including Dr Per Ethelberg and Dr Susanne Klingenberg. I am grateful for all their help over the years.

All the texts in Latin and other languages quoted here are widely available both in the original language and in a number of translations, including many in English. Most of the translations are old, often more than a hundred years or so. The author has been quite satisfied with standard readily available translations (rendered here as short quotes), originally published by Harvard University Press (within the Loeb series) or Penguin as well as a number of other publishers, including several Danish, German and French ones. For Tacitus, the two volumes on *Germania* published by Bruun & Lund in 1974 in Danish and Latin have been particularly useful (Wormianum). Whenever possible, the author has consulted several editions, including edited texts in Latin. However, no claim is made of any novel or deep-going studies on the Latin texts, sometimes available in several ancient editions, nor their original literary and historical contexts.

Hostages and Bog Bodies

New Interpretations

Adeo ut efficacius obligentur animi civitatum quibus inter obsides puellae quoque nobiles imperantur.

Tacitus' *Germania*, Book 8

Introduction

The bog bodies of the Early Iron Age in northern Europe, in particular the centuries BC, constitute one of the most fascinating classes of archaeological finds of the era and region. Very particular conditions of preservation in oxygen-starved wet environments have secured stunning data (van der Sanden 1996; Lund 2002; Asingh & Lynnerup 2007; etc.) (Fig. 1.1 and 1.2; Table 1.1). Human parts and even entire human bodies in the flesh are also known from bogs in other prehistoric periods, but the cited chronological and geographical concentration in the Early Iron Age of Denmark and northwestern Europe calls for one particular set of explanation, or rather several.

In an age and a region otherwise dominated by cremations, the bog bodies are evidence of a very different norm of burial. In Denmark, for instance, the bog bodies constitute the only uncremated human beings in the entire first millennium BC. Most of the bodies – men, women and even children – are naked and were obviously killed,



Figure 1.1 The Tollund Man, found in a bog in Central Jylland/Jutland, c. 300 BC

Photo: National Museum/Silkeborg Museum

	BOG BODIES	CLOTHING	PLAITS	SUM
1000				
				0
900		x*		
	x*	x*		3 (3*)
800				
				0
700	xx			
	x			3 (0*)
600	xxx			
				3 (0*)
500				
	x	x*		2 (1*)
400	x*x*x	x*		
	x*x*x*	x*x	x*x*x*	12 (10*)
300	x*x*x*x*x*x*x*x*xxxxx	x*x*x*x*x*x*	x*x*x*	
	x*x*x*x*x*x*	x*		26 (21*)
200	xxx			
	x*x*x*x*x*	x*		8 (5*)
100	x*x*x*xx	x*x*xx		
	x*xxxxx			12 (4*)
0	x*x	x*x*		
	x			5 (3*)
100	x*x	x*		
				3 (2*)
200	x*x			
	x*			3 (2*)
300				
				0
400		x		
				1 (0*)
500	x			
Total	56 (29*)	20 (16*)	6 (6*)	82 (51*)

Figure 1.2 Sum diagram for carbon-14 dates of bog bodies, clothing and plaits of human hair found in bogs

Some of the best finds have more than one date. Some of the older dates are probably less reliable. The most recent high-quality carbon-14 dates are the most reliable; these are all marked with an asterisk.

After Ebbesen 2008 (plaits); Mannering *et al.* 2009 (bog bodies and clothing); cf. Ravn 2010

Table 1.1 Selected very well-preserved so-called bog bodies

Denmark	Name	Location	Region	Date	Age at death	Cause of death	Other details
M	Borremose Man	Borremose	Northern Jylland	8th century BC	?	Strangled, back of the head crushed after death	
W	Woman I	Borremose	Northern Jylland	?	?	Cause of death unknown	Bones of an infant by her side
W	Woman II	Borremose	Northern Jylland	8th century BC	25–35	Face crushed after death; actual cause of death unknown	
W	‘Queen Gunhild’	Gutskær	Central Jylland	c. 490 BC	40	Cause of death unknown	
M	Tollund Man	Tollund	Central Jylland	c. 375 BC	c. 30	Hanged	
M	Grauballe Man	Grauballe	Central Jylland	c. 300 BC	c. 30	Throat cut	
W	Roum Girl	Roum	Northern Jylland	(Early) Iron Age	c. 20	Head cut off, no other body parts	
W	Elling Girl	Elling	Central Jylland	c. 205 BC	25–30	Hanged	
W	Huldremose Woman	Huldremose	Eastern Jylland	c. 150 BC	>40	Right arm cut off before death	

M	Dätgen Man	Dätgen	Northern Germany	c. 150 BC	c. 30	Stabbed in chest and beheaded
M	Rendswühren Man	Rendswühren	Holstein	c. 50 BC	?	Blow to the forehead
M	Wedinger Man I	Wedinger	The Netherlands	Around early first century AD	?	Stab wound to the heart
M	Wedinger Man II	Wedinger	The Netherlands	Around early first century AD	?	?
W	Yde Girl	Drenthe	The Netherlands	Early first century AD	c. 16	Strangled, hair on right side of head cut off
M	Damendorf Man	Slesvig	Southernmost Jylland	c. 220 AD	?	?
W	Windeby Girl (Boy?)	Slesvig	Southernmost Jylland	First century AD	13–14	?
M	Windeby Man	Slesvig	Southernmost Jylland	Same as the Windeby Girl?	Middle-aged	Strangled
M	Osterby Man	Slesvig	Southernmost Jylland	c. 100 AD	?	Traces of blows (after death), head cut off, no other body parts

Total: 10 Men, 8 Women, including a young teenager and a teenager.

(Continued)

Table 1.1 Continued

Outside Denmark etc.	Name	Location	Region	Date	Age at death	Cause of death	Other details
M	Lindow Man II		England	c. 50 BC	c. 25	Strangled	Skull crushed, ribs broken; hair cut short; very short beard
M/W?	Lindow I & III (55 metres from Lindow I)		England (c. 200 metres from Lindow II)	c. 50 BC	?	?	
M	Gallagher Man		Ireland	c. 50 BC	?	Strangled	
M	Clonycavan Man		Ireland	?	'Young'	Blow to the head	Lived on a vegetarian diet in the months before his death
M	Old Croghan Man		Ireland	?	c. 25	?	Very tall; ate more animal protein than the Clonycavan Man in the months prior to his death; tortured in connection with death

M = man; W = woman. For recent and more precise dates see Mannering *et al.* 2009 and Table 1.2.

Source: Asingh and Lynnerup 2007

often by hanging, although other methods of killing are also recorded. There have been occasional claims that the dead body carries evidence that suggests the use of unnecessary violence or 'overkill', more than would have been needed to kill the person, but this seems uncertain. Male and female bog bodies occur in about equal numbers in Denmark while males dominate the material found elsewhere, such as in northern Germany, and also in Ireland, England, and the Netherlands (van der Sanden 1996, 189f. with map). A number of the bog bodies from England and elsewhere belong to the Neolithic period and Bronze Age.

Interpretations

Based on various observations drawn from the *Germania* by Publius Cornelius Tacitus (c. AD 56–117), tradition would have it that the bog bodies were criminals who had been killed (Much 1937). The 'punishment of criminals' theory was partly modified after the First World War by the suggestion that the culprits were sacrificed to the god whose rules they had violated. In the latter half of the twentieth century a 'pure' sacrificial hypothesis gained ground, based on the many particular, even luxurious, finds in the prehistory of Denmark that came from bogs and seemed to be votive sacrifices (Stone Age to Early Iron Age): this is the case with P.V. Glob and nearly all modern archaeologists, at least in Scandinavia (cf. van der Sanden 1996, 166f.). Bogs are indeed special, liminal places, seen by some as places where it was possible to relate positively to another world, just as it was – indeed is – with the sky. Bogs are also places where it was possible to deposit items that would otherwise contaminate the living; or, in other words, were 'dangerous' to society (Randsborg and Christensen 2006, 45f.).

Recently, a hypothesis that the victims were social outcasts or 'witches' has been introduced (Lund 2002). It has also been proposed

that burial in a bog was a common norm for those who had suffered unusual deaths, as certainly the violent death of many bog bodies could be termed (Ravn 2010). In the following paragraphs yet another hypothesis is introduced, for the first time in writing, after some years of pondering: that the bog bodies might be or at least include legal hostages (Latin *obsides*), killed in anger over broken treaty arrangements, and in accordance with the wording of such mutual agreements. The victims are innocent and have not committed any crime but their nation and master has, in the eyes of the nation that received the hostages.

Such a novel hypothesis is admittedly difficult to prove, but it corresponds with the fact that hostage giving and accepting was a common practice in Classical Antiquity, even involving ‘barbarian’ societies; and that hostages are often reported to be killed (Walker 2005; Allen 2006; cf. Moscovich 1980; etc.). At this point it should be stressed that hostages in Roman society, for example, were not abducted persons (compare the situation of hostages captured and killed for psychological effect by political and religious extremists in today’s world). Rather, their lives were controlled and restricted, like that of slaves, but they were not put in prison. A person might be a hostage for a longer period of time, as stipulated according to a treaty. In Classical Antiquity men, women and children were all acceptable as hostages, even though men were clearly preferred owing to their particular political position and social value.

The bog bodies

The Danish bog bodies, as well as some others, carry many traces of a gruesome death; strangulation, hanging, cutting of throats, smashing of body parts and, finally, careful deposition in cold bogs, often with stakes to keep the body underwater (Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Clothing is

Table 1.2 Recent (and some older) carbon-14 dates of present-day Danish bog bodies from the Early Iron Age

Bog bodies			
W	Auning	100 BC–80 AD	around 10 BC
M	Baunsø	65–130 AD	around 100 AD*
M	Borremose I	353–176 BC	around 260 BC*
		850–540 BC	around 690 BC
M	Borremose II	392–209 BC	around 300 BC*
		750–380 BC	around 560 BC
W	Borremose III	820–530 BC	around 680 BC
		770–420 BC	around 595 BC
		396–235 BC	around 320 BC*
W	Bredmose	350–50 BC	around 200 BC
W	Corselitze (Falster)	240–340 AD	around 290 AD*
W	Elling	360–200 BC	around 280 BC
		360–190 BC	around 280 BC
		360–120 BC	around 290 BC
		340–50 BC	around 200 BC
W?	Fræer	50 BC–25 AD	around 10 BC*
?	Grathe Hede	160–40 BC	around 60 BC*
M	Grauballe	490–230 BC	around 360 BC(+)
		390–210 BC	around 300 BC+
		150 BC–30 AD	around 60 BC
		110 BC–50 AD	around 30 BC
W	Haraldskær	750–390 BC	around 570 BC
		409–363 BC	around 390 BC*
		200–50 BC	around 125 BC*
		179–59 BC	around 120 BC*
		161–42 BC	around 100 BC*
?	Horreby Lyng	370–210 BC	around 290 BC*
W	Huldremose I	192–61 BC	around 130 BC*
		40 BC–220 AD	around 90 AD
M	Karlby	110 BC–60 AD	around 30 BC
		50 BC–80 AD	around 20 AD

(Continued)

Table 1.2 Continued

Bog bodies			
W	Krogens Mølle	392–234 BC	around 310 BC*
		357–203 BC	around 280 BC*
		180 BC–80 AD	around 50 BC
W	Møgelmosse	400–200 BC	around 300 BC
		120–380 AD	around 240 AD
W	Roum	40 BC–60 AD	around 10 AD*
?	Rønbjerg II	350–100 BC	around 230 BC*
M	Rønbjerg III	342–97 BC	around 220 BC*
?	Skærum	100–140 AD	around 120 AD
W	Stidsholt	383–211 BC	around 300 BC*
M	Søgård I	337–102 BC	around 220 BC*
		200 BC–10 AD	around 100 BC
M	Søgård II	130–320 AD	around 230 AD*
		430–600 AD	around 520 AD
?	Thorup I	350–110 BC	around 230 BC*
M	Tollund	510–380 BC	around 450 BC
		400–260 BC	around 330 BC+
		360–200 BC	around 280 BC
		350–50 BC	around 200 BC
?	Tvedemosse	195–95 BC	around 150 BC*
M	Undelev	820–795 BC	around 810 BC*
		760–540 BC	around 650 BC
M	Vester Torsted	120–330 AD	around 230 AD*
W?	Vindum	750–50 BC	around 400 BC
		386–203 BC	around 290 BC*

Total: 11 men, 13 women, and 6 uncertain. The recent carbon-14 date of Søgård II gives the Imperial Roman period.

Clothing			
	Borremose IV	19 BC–69 AD	around 30 AD*
	Borremose V	360–200 BC	around 280 BC*
	Havndal	346–166 BC	around 260 BC*

Oksenbjerg	345–425 AD	around 390 AD*
Rebild	350–170 BC	around 260 BC*
Refstrup Hovedgård	250–550 AD	around 400 AD
Risehjarup	68–209 AD	around 140 AD*
Skibelund	20 BC–72 AD	around 30 AD*
Skærsø	170 BC–20 AD	around 80 BC
Stokholm	350–100 BC	around 230 BC*
Store Borremose	157–42 BC	around 100 BC*
Thorup II	390–210 BC	around 300 BC*
True	180–1 BC	around 90 BC
?	400–230 BC	around 320 BC*
Vesterris	410–200 BC	around 310 BC
Vivsø	892–802 BC	around 850 BC*
Ømark	370–200 BC	around 285 BC*
Ørbækgård	896–827 BC	around 860 BC*
Ålestrup	485–385 BC	around 440 BC*
Årdestrup	180–50 BC	around 120 BC*

Note: Arnitlund (around 830 AD*), Tvis (around 1810 AD*), and Vong (around 1450 AD*) are omitted, while the finds from the close of the Bronze Age are listed (9th–6th century BC), as are finds up to about 400 AD (close of the Imperial Roman period)

Plaits of human hair (number of plaits)

Sterbygård, Døstrup (7)	360–200 BC	around 280 BC*
Boldrupgård, Hyllebjerg (3)	360–180 BC	around 270 BC*
Vindumhede, Vindum (4)	400–230 BC	around 315 BC*
Thorup, Simested (3)	360–200 BC	around 280 BC*
‘Bundløs Mose’, Ejning (1+?)	400–230 BC	around 315 BC*
Vingmose, Falster (1+?)	400–230 BC	around 315 BC*

Total: 6 finds, with 19+ plaits

Except for Corselitze (island of Falster), all the finds are from Jylland (cf. Mannering *et al.* 2009, 121; mistakes corrected). The 68% probability range is applied, as well as an average date for the sake of quick comparison. M = man; W = woman. * = recent carbon-14 date. + = reliable older carbon-14 date.

The second list is of items of clothing, most having received new dates. Probably these items also represent bog bodies, deposited nearby, but not (yet) found. See Table 1.3 for additional carbon-14 dates of bog bodies.

The final list is of finds of cut-off plaits of human hair, probably from women, found in bogs, all in Northern Jylland (Ebbesen 2008). The dates are remarkably similar, around 300 BC.

sparse, as in the case of the cap and belt of the Tollund Man, but sometimes items of clothing were deposited with the dead. At Huldremose the textiles are of very high quality, and there are no examples of poor-quality clothing. From this point of view it seems that bog bodies are well-to-do to high-ranking persons. However, the contents of their stomachs reveal last meals of appalling quality: almost down to the level of pig fodder. The men are beardless and display stubble. The hair of a couple of young women has been cut and one side of the skull shaved. Thus, it would seem that the dead were meant to suffer during their final days, and certainly meant to be displayed as despised human beings. It would appear that their status has been lowered before their death; not what you would expect for a sacrifice, or rather a votive offering given to the gods.

In terms of dates, the Danish finds, all recently re-dated, are mainly of the Pre-Roman Iron Age (the Roman Republican period), most being of the last three centuries BC or so, but there are even finds from the late Bronze Age as well as some from the Imperial Roman Period, in particular the earlier part (Mannering *et al.* 2009; cf. Ravn 2010). It is to be expected that all periods will have produced at least some bog bodies (as a result of unintended drowning, murders, etc.). The interesting thing is the peaks of the dates and the explanation for such major occurrences.

In other words, the bog bodies mainly occur in the period between the large military deposition of Hjortspring of the fourth century BC, and the slightly later Krogshøjle deposition (Randsborg 1995), and the new and much larger wave of large military depositions from the close of the second century AD onwards (Jørgensen *et al.* 2003). Counting the Danish finds alone, we have eleven men and thirteen women, plus some finds of body parts of uncertain sex. Counting all northwest European bog bodies from the period we arrive at a rather more male-dominated picture (van der Sanden 1996, 189f.) (cf. Table 1.3). To the degree that the bog bodies are indeed hostages who have been killed, it can be seen that both sexes were considered

Table 1.3 Older carbon-14 dates of bog-bodies

Fredbogård I	920–780 BC	around 850 BC
Almose	550–380 BC	around 470 BC
Gelsted Nederland	520–370 BC	around 450 BC
Uglemosen	560–400 BC	around 480 BC
Bellevue Skov	400–200 BC	around 300 BC
Blichersvej	380–160 BC	around 270 BC
Gadevang Mose	400–200 BC	around 300 BC
Illemose	220–210 BC	around 220 BC
Jordløse Mose	400–230 BC	around 320 BC
Rislev I	380–200 BC	around 290 BC
Rislev II	360–150 BC	around 260 BC
Smouenvej	190–50 BC	around 120 BC
Tybjerg Mose I & II	520–200 BC	around 360 BC
Verup Mose	410–200 BC	around 310 BC
Allestedskov	100 BC–90 AD	around 10 BC
Hygin Vestergård II	50 BC–60 AD	around 10 AD
Ndr. Bjerrgrav Mose	180 BC–30 AD	around 80 BC
Rappendam	180 BC–90 AD	around 50 BC
Vædebro	110 BC–110 AD	around 0 BC/AD
Bukkerup Langmose	120–330 AD	around 230 AD
Trørød Mose	130–260 AD	around 200 AD
Tollestrup Mose	240–430 AD	around 340 AD
Baggesvogn	0–170 AD	around 90 AD

The 68% probability range is again applied, as well as an average date for the sake of quick comparison. The character of some of these finds, which also hold various other items, is sometimes uncertain.

Source: Ravn 2010, with references (cf. Table 1.2)

valuable in serving the ends of this judicial institution; the same is the case for children and teenagers.

Geographically, some of the bog bodies have appeared at interesting locations. The Borremose specimens were deposited in the ‘lands of the Cimbri’ in bogs near a large fortified village in a bog from the late

Pre-Roman Iron Age. A fine Etruscan kettle was deposited in a bog not too far away at Mosbæk, and the world-famous huge silver cauldron, likely produced in southeastern Europe, is from a nearby bog at Gundestrup.

Other human finds from the Pre-Roman Iron Age are made up of one to seven very long plaits of likely female human hair (Ebbesen 2008) (Table 1.2). The finds are all from bogs in Northern Jylland (and only there), and are remarkably similar in date, about 300 BC. The plaits have never been found together with other items. The usual interpretation is that the plaits represent sacrifices (cf. Wilke 1924). However, the plaits are cut off very close to the scalp, indicating that the cutting is in fact a way of humiliating the women in question without actually killing them. Tacitus mentions that a husband may cut off an unfaithful wife's hair, strip her naked, chase her from their home and flog her in public (*Germania*, Book 19). But why then carefully deposit the plaits in a bog? Similarly, it is reported that hostages might expect to receive bad treatment of various demeaning sorts (Walker 2005, Appendix 1B).

Classical antiquity

Tacitus' *Germania*, or *De Origine et Situ Germanorum* (Concerning the Origin and Situation of the Germanics) was completed in c. AD 98. The work is very often quoted in connection with the interpretation of the bog bodies as executed criminals, despite their sex and despite their age. Admittedly, Tacitus is writing at a slightly later period than the date of most of the Danish bog bodies, but only slightly in the grand scheme of archaeology. The relevant passages from *Germania* appear in the following books.

In Book 7 it is mentioned that capital punishment is the reserve of priests, at least in connection with military affairs. In Book 12, the role of the assembly in criminal charges, especially those involving capital punishment, is mentioned. It is said that traitors and deserters

(offenders against the state) are hanged from trees, while cowards, shirkers and sodomites are pressed down under a wicker hurdle into the slimy mud of a bog. Obviously these passages do not readily account for the female bog bodies.

In Book 8 it is said that Germanic armies are rallied by the women making the man realize the imminent prospect of enslavement, 'a fate which the Germans fear more desperately for their women than for themselves. Indeed, you can secure a surer hold on these nations if you compel them to include among a consignment of hostages some girls of noble family ... they believe that there resides in women an element of holiness and a gift of prophecy'. The last part of this quote is, of course very important. In Book 19 it is said that (female) adultery is extremely rare. 'A guilty wife is summarily punished by her husband. He cuts off her hair, strips her naked ...'.

In Book 38, concerning the nation of the Semnones (in Central Germania, and of the Suebi section of the Germanics), human sacrifice is mentioned as taking place in a holy grove, regarded as 'the cradle of the race and the dwelling-place of the supreme god'. In Book 40, nations worshipping the goddess of Nerthus, or 'Mother Earth', are mentioned, Nerthus being a fertility goddess (cf. English Earth, German Erde). Nerthus rides a vehicle among her people:

On an island of the ocean stands an inviolate grove, in which, veiled with a cloth is a vehicle that none but the priest may touch ... After that, the vehicle, the vestments, and (believe it if you will) the goddess herself, are cleansed in a secluded lake. This service is performed by slaves who are immediately afterwards drowned in the lake.

Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 BC), in his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (Commentaries on the Gallic War) of c. 51 BC, mentions hostages several times. One case concerns a request in 61 BC by the Romans for the return of hostages from the defeated Celtic Aedui, allies of the Romans. The latter had been defeated by the Celtic Sequani and their German allies (I.1). Having considered these

ancient sources, it will now be useful to turn to a comprehensive modern study concerning hostages in and at the time of the Roman Republic (Walker 2005) (Tables 1.4 and 1.5). This study concerns a large number of literary sources (including a couple of legendary tales about female hostages). The discussion of the institution is comprehensive, and includes a natural distaste for surrendering hostages to foreign powers (also see Allen 2006).

The Romans very often received hostages. Many of these were young males, in particular those who had recently become hostages as a result of treaties. Even young people who would have been classified as children were used as hostages. The numbers of hostages vary considerably, from a few to several hundred. The hostages were also employed to explain and promote the Roman ways when they returned to their home nation. Thus, ‘barbarians’ of high social standing were desired as hostages by the Romans, who were usually opposed to receiving female hostages (at least after 400 BC, when the records become substantial). Women held no political power in the eyes of the Romans and were thus not commonly seen to be suitable as hostages.

Table 1.4 Older sample of carbon-14 dated bog bodies from the Early Iron Age in Northern Europe

Location	Men	Women	Child/teenager	Total
The Netherlands	6	1	1 (girl)	8
Lower Saxony	8	0	1 (boy)	9
Germany	3	0	1 (girl or boy)	4
Schleswig-Holstein				
Total	17	1	3	21
Denmark	5	6	1	12

One of the bog bodies is from the later Bronze Age. Various European regions: distribution according to sex. The total number of bog bodies in the regions is of course much higher; cf. Table 1.2 for a more recent and larger sample from Denmark. The relatively high number of women from Denmark is noted (cf. the same tendency in Table 1.2).

Source: van der Sanden 1996, 189f.

Table 1.5 Received hostages in BC centuries, according to Roman and other classical literary sources

Number of cases distributed according to receiving nations and sex of the hostages, when both are known

	Male	Female/mixed
Greek nations	36	8
Roman nation	28	3
Other nations	5	4
Total	69	15

Number of cases where the type of exaction is known: distribution according to recipient's nationality, to the age of the hostages, and to the type of agreement

Nation	Age distribution			Type of agreement			
	Adult	Children	Mixed	Treaty	Private	Extralegal	Other
Greek	21	15	6	19	14	8	1
Roman	18	24	4	22	6	16	2
Other	3	4	6	5	2	3	3
Total	42	43	16	46	22	27	6

Source: Walker 2005

Hostages were usually well treated, but some were misused, including sexually, brutalized in other ways, or killed for various reasons. Some escapes are also noted. Violation of an agreement by the donor state is of course reason for retaliation. In nine known outcomes of hostage agreements from the period of the Roman Republic the hostages were killed; these nine cases amount to one in five of the known ones (Fig. 1.3). Of the more than 100 Gallic, German and British nations mentioned by Caesar, thirty-seven were rendering hostages to the Romans (Moscovich 1980). According to Caesar, the Romans often treated treaty hostages well, in contrast to the Gauls and the Germans. However, the Romans clearly often treated their captives badly, killing or mutilating them.

KNOWN CASES		KNOWN FATES					
		Executed	Rescued	Escaped	Released	Other	
Male	81	5					
Male & female	8	2					
Female	6	0					
?	67	2					
Total	162	9 (18%)	7	5	21 (41%)	9	

Eight of the cases are legendary. The actual number of hostages is not given here but known in many cases, running from a few into several hundreds. The fate of the hostages is noted in 51 cases (including two legendary). Hostages are known to have been executed (for various reasons) in nine cases: five concerning men, two concerning both men and women; in two cases involving execution the sex of the hostages is unknown. Hostages are known to have been rescued in seven cases (one legendary), and managed to escape in five. A decent number of cases (about 21, one legendary) mention hostages being released, one way or another, often through the intervention of a third party.

Figure 1.3 Total number of cases of received hostages where sex and fates are known

Sources: Roman and other Classical literary sources concerning the BC centuries (data: Walker 2005)

Conclusions

The bog bodies are certainly testimonies of violence written on cultural paper. The hypothesis that the dead persons are killed hostages is, of course, still unproven, but should nevertheless be presented since it is not in contradiction to the evidence, both real and circumstantial. Even though the Romans preferred male hostages (more so than the Greek nations: cf. Table 1.4), all hostages (of standing) would do: male, female or child. The sex of 'barbarian' hostages is rarely known, but the high status and supposed particular powers of certain women would make such captives particularly important. The observation is supported by the passage from Tacitus' *Germania* (Book 8) cited above concerning Germanic fear that women might become slaves or hostages.

To judge from the bodies of the bog people – and accepting the hostage hypothesis – the Germans were less interested in demanding very young hostages (classified as children), while women were highly valued in this respect. The bodies of the bog people and their clothing both support the idea that these individuals were of a fairly high status. However, the treatment of the living bog people in the period shortly before their untimely death clearly suggests that they were regarded with hatred, or even fear, as underlined by the sadistic behaviour of their captors: animal fodder for food, nakedness at death (if not earlier), examples of hair cut and shaved, the men unshaved for days, etc. This is clearly not the treatment one would give to a fine sacrifice to a god. Also, during the entire first millennium BC in Denmark, as elsewhere, the bog people are the only human beings who are not given the proper burial treatment of the age, cremation. So, the uncremated state of the bog people in itself is a derogatory signal.

The site of the deposition of the bog bodies is as peculiar as their deaths. It can certainly be argued that they were criminals or

social outcasts (even through no fault of their own). In Tacitus' *Germania*, Book 12 it is said that cowards, shirkers and sodomites are pressed down under a wicker hurdle into the slimy mud of a bog. The remark in Book 7 that capital punishment is the reserve of the priests may link legal and religious practices. In Book 40, the cult of Nerthus among Germanic nations in Jylland and northern Germany is mentioned. It is said here that immediately after the religious ceremonies, the slaves serving the cult were drowned in a lake by the holy grove, but seemingly not 'sacrificed'. In Book 9 of *Germania*, Tacitus says that human sacrifices are only given to 'Mercury' (i.e. the supreme Nordic god Odin, a sky god) and only on certain occasions. Mercury is also the only god to receive such offerings. This remark seems to preclude the idea that the bog bodies were sacrifices.

At any rate, the killing and deposition of the bog bodies is difficult to imagine without reference to the gods. Tacitus, in his 'Annals' (*Ab excessu divi Augusti* of about AD 117, mentions two Germanic nations in western central Germany engaging each other in battle in the year AD 58. The Chatti (actually the losers), in the event of victory had 'devoted ... the enemy's army to Mars and Mercury, a vow which consigns horses, men, everything indeed on the vanquished side to destruction' (Book XIII.57). One is reminded of the North European military depositions.

Thus, apart from the social status of the bog bodies and the judicial reasons for their execution we should consider attributes likely to have been ascribed to these people, for instance that they were probably considered 'dangerous' to society. The particular site of the depositions – a bog – is perhaps explained by its being a place of shame in certain cases, as is the inhumation burial: 'like an animal'. The confusing thing is that depositions that seem to be sacrifices are also found in bogs, including 'bog pots', very common in the Early Iron Age in Denmark (Becker 1971). Possibly, these pots, found

together with remains of food, relate to Nerthus, the fertility goddess. But, of course, not all bogs may have been sacred, or sacred in all periods.

Finally, in terms of military history, the Danish bog bodies seem in period mainly to have occurred in between the restricted early, or Pre-Roman, and the prominent late, or later Roman Imperial period of military depositions – also in bogs – with boats and huge amounts of weapons (Randsborg 1995, Jørgensen *et al.* 2003, 44ff. (J. Ilkjær)). These martial finds would seem to mirror actual armed confrontations of a very serious nature; in other words, major battles. Accepting the hostage hypothesis, the bog bodies mainly correspond to a period supposedly of armed truce among the Danish regions: in itself suggesting a rather advanced political system, incidentally accompanied by graves with weapons.

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The Cimbri

Death · Resurrection · Death

Hostes binis castris atque ingenti praeda potiti noua quadam atque insolita exsecratione cuncta quae ceperant pessum dederunt; uestis discissa et proiecta est, aurum argentumque in flumen abiectum, loricae uirorum concisae, phalerae equorum disperditae, equi ipsi gurgitibus inmersi, homines laqueis collo inditis ex arboribus suspensi sunt, ita ut nihil praedae uictor, nihil misericordiae uictus agnosceret.

Paulus Orosius (c. AD 375–418+), *Historium Adversum Paganos* V.16 on the aftermath of the battle at Arausio (Orange) in 105 BC

Celts to Germans

The first Roman author to make a distinction between Celts or Gauls and Germans is Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 BC), in his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (Commentaries on the Gallic War) of c. 51 BC (A. A. Lund 1993). Caesar's own opinion, no doubt coloured by military and political considerations, is that the Germans live on the right shore of the Rhine, and the Gauls on the left (I.1; I.30f.). In accordance with this, the Germans are described as being more 'barbarian' than the Gauls. The Greek historian Strabo (c. 64/63 BC–c. AD 24), in his *Geographica*, which he worked on until his death, mentions that the Romans called the Germani 'the genuine' (as a subset of the Gauls),

probably another reference to the idea that the Germans were wild and unspoiled (IV.4).

Caesar is uncertain about the nationality of the famous Cimbri and Teutons, who were the terror of Rome at the close of the second century BC (Fig. 2.1). The Cimbri appeared out of the blue in the eastern Alps in 113 BC when they were victorious against a whole Roman army. The Cimbri crushed another major Roman army at Arausio (Orange) in the south of France in 105 BC. The Romans fielded ten or twelve legions at Arausio plus auxiliaries, but lost perhaps 100,000 men. The Romans then gave the command to the

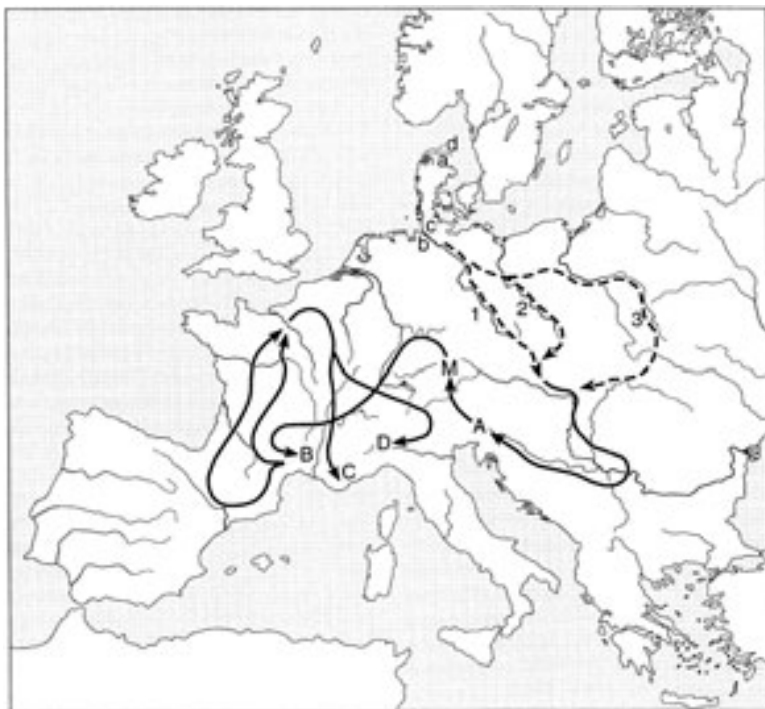


Figure 2.1 The commonly supposed migrations of the Cimbri. The broken lines are pure speculations, as is the approach to point 'A' (the first known battle with the Romans). After RGA Band 16, entry: Kimbern (cf. Kaul and Martens 1995).

veteran general G. Marius (157–86 BC), who managed to beat the Cimbri at Vercellae (Vercelli) in northeastern Italy in 101 BC.

The Romans fielded eight legions plus cavalry and auxiliaries at Vercellae, where virtually the whole barbarian army perished, with losses of perhaps 200,000, including the captives. By then Marius had already crushed the allies of the Cimbri, the Teutones with the Ambrones (Ombrii/Umbrians? – their name a battle cry), at Aquae Sextiae (Aix-en-Provence) in 102 BC. The Romans fielded six legions at Aquae Sextiae plus cavalry and auxiliaries; the barbarian losses were perhaps 100,000, including the captured. Thus, the Cimbri entered Roman history as a major enemy, even matching mighty Carthage, and nobly forgetting about Caesar crushing the Gauls and Roman armies marching on each other during the first century BC.

The language and nationality of the Cimbri are not known for certain; perhaps they were Celts, or mainly Celts, but their army may well have contained other elements as well. In fact, they may have stemmed from eastern Central Europe, the region where they appeared for the first time. Around 100 BC no Roman author had yet worked out a distinction between Celts and Germans. The word ‘Teutones’ means simply ‘people’ and is probably old German. The word ‘Cimbri’ has seen very many interpretations, none of them wholly convincing. The names of the leaders of both the barbarian armies seem to be Celtic.

The idea that the Cimbri migrated in huge numbers from Old Denmark, in fact Jylland, finds no archaeological support. What is clear, though, is that the Danish region was quite well connected with other parts of Europe at the time, as demonstrated by imported Greek, Etruscan, Celtic and Southeast European cauldrons (Riis 1959; etc.; for illustrations see Jensen 2001, Vol. 3; for a richly referenced general overview of the period, see Randsborg 2009). The best known example is the richly decorated Gundestrup silver cauldron from North Jylland (Klindt-Jensen 1961; Kaul 1995; Nielsen *et al.* 2005) holding 130 litres,

or exactly five Roman amphorae, while a bronze cauldron of the Cimbri held twenty amphorae according to Strabo (as above, VII.2.3) (Fig. 2.2). For comparison, the famous Greek krater of around 500 BC, the largest metal vessel known from antiquity, found in the splendid Vix Grave in Eastern France, holds 1,100 litres, or around 42 amphorae (Rolley 2003).

Celtic parade waggons and swords (Petersen 1888; Harck 1988), Thracian gold jewellery and similar artefacts are also known from Denmark (Kaul and Martens 1995). Heavy crown-shaped necklaces (male torcs indicating rank) in bronze can be followed from Jylland through Germany and Poland to the Ukraine, denoting a super-regional connection among elites. A highly evocative find is the large and very fast Hjortspring boat and military equipment, which also has international connotations (Randsborg 1995). Thus northern Germanic elements among the Cimbri and Teutones cannot be ruled out, but nor can they be truly proved. The closest we can come, perhaps, is the late and thus rather uncertain note by Lucius Annaeus Florus (second century AD) in his *Epitome de T. Livio Bellorum omnium annorum DCC Libri duo*, that they were driven from their settlements 'by the sea' (I.38); that is, by flooding.

Roman expansion

Around the birth of Christ, and certainly prior to the Roman defeat in AD 9 in the Teutoburg Forest between the rivers Ems and Weser, which resulted in the loss of three Roman legions with auxiliaries and cavalry, imperial navies explored the coasts of the North Sea. One such expedition, in 12 BC, was led by Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus (38 BC–AD 9), but there were more, including one in 16 AD by Julius Caesar Germanicus (15 BC–AD 19), nominated commander of the Roman forces in Germany upon the death of Emperor Augustus



Figure 2.2 The Gundestrup silver cauldron, northeastern Jylland: the bottom plate or disc with a magnificent figure of a bull.

The cauldron is decorated in southeast European style while the shape of the vessel is rather west or central European. The date is contested; most of the Thracian parallels (i.e. 'Bulgarian' and at any rate from south of the Danube) are from about 300 BC and in a Classical style. A number of details of the weaponry displayed on the cauldron (round shield bosses, spurs) point to a later date, the second century BC and later (cf. Kaul 1995). Scientific analyses have not been consistent and are anyway quite uncertain (some give 'around 300 BC' (Nielsen *et al.* 2005, 46f.; 57).

The region of manufacture, to judge from the style of execution and decoration, is most likely the area mainly to the north of the estuary of the Danube, the lands of the Getae and their western neighbours, the famous Dacians (cf. data in e.g. Hoddinott 1981; Oberleitner *et al.* 1981). A date in the first century BC, even its latter half, is not improbable. If so, any link with the Cimbri fighting in central Europe before 100 BC is ruled out.

Source: Klindt-Jensen 1961

in AD 14. Germanicus was supported by Gaius *Silius* Aulus Caecina Largus (died AD 24), who most likely signed with that name the sublime Roman silver beakers found in a princely grave at Hoby on Lolland in Denmark (Friis-Johansen 1911–1935 [1923]).

These are the first known events that brought the Roman Empire into close contact with southern Scandinavia and the Baltic. Under the Emperor Nero (reigned AD 54–68), a Roman equestrian is known to have travelled to East Prussia/Lithuania to buy amber in greater amounts. His is probably the first recorded eyewitness report for this part of the Baltic, a report that may well have influenced Roman authors of the period.

In Augustus' own *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* of AD 14 (the funerary inscription on his burial monument in Rome; the best-preserved edition is on the Monumentum Ancyranum in Ankara, Turkey) the emperor claims:

My fleet sailed from the mouth of the Rhine eastwards as far as the lands of the Cimbri, to which, up to that time, no Roman had ever penetrated either by land or by sea, and the Cimbri and Charydes and Semnones [probably listed from north to south] and other people of the Germans of that same region through their envoys sought my friendship and that of the Roman people. [Other nations are also listed as seeking friendship from Augustus and the Romans.]

This statement is highly important and no doubt made an impact on the Roman authors of the period, as we shall see below, awakening a new interest in the Cimbri, and a belief in their continuing existence in the far north.

Augustus' Semnones lived somewhere on and to the east of the middle Elbe according to *Germania* (*De Origine et Situ Germanorum*/Concerning the Origin and Situation of the Germans) of c. AD 98, by the Roman historian Publius G. Cornelius Tacitus (c. AD 56–117) (Bruun and Lund 1974). Augustus' Charydes/Charudes occur in

Caesar's 'Gallic War' as *Harudes* (perhaps as in *haru(spex)*, soothsayer, but also other interpretations they were also invaders of Gaul (II.2):

But a worse thing had befallen the victorious Sequani than the vanquished Aedui, for Ariovistus, the king of the Germans, had settled in their territories, and had seized upon a third of their land, which was the best in the whole of Gaul, and was now ordering them to depart from another third part, because a few months previously 24,000 men of the Harudes had come to him, for whom room and settlements must be provided.

Notably, Tacitus does not mention the Charudes/Harudes, which might indicate that they appear in his *Germania* under a different name, or, perhaps, that they did not arrive from the North at all. Nor does Tacitus mention the Teutones, the powerful allies of the Cimbri in the major battles in Central and Southern Europe at the close of the second century BC. Tacitus mentions the Cimbri as living in 'the same corner of Germany' (the northwestern part), 'nearest to the ocean', a surprisingly vague note for such a famous nation (*Germania* 37). The implication is, of course, that Tacitus had no information on contemporary Cimbri; quite simply because they were not there.

Resurrection of the Cimbri

What happened in the early first century AD was that the Cimbri and the Teutones were placed squarely with the Germans, and that they were given a northern homeland. Strabo, in his *Geographica*, relates:

As for the Cimbri, some things that are told about them are incorrect and others are extremely improbable. For instance, one could not accept such a reason for their having become a wandering and piratical folk as this – that while they were dwelling on a peninsula they were driven out of their habitations by a great flood-tide; for in fact they still hold the country which they held in earlier times; and

they sent as a present to Augustus [63 BC–AD 19] the most sacred cauldron in their country, with a plea for his friendship and for an amnesty of their earlier offences, and when their petition was granted they set sail for home; and it is ridiculous to suppose that they departed from their homes because they were incensed on account of a phenomenon that is natural and eternal, occurring twice every day (VII.2.1).

Strabo also relates that ‘The northern Germans live by the sea, from the estuary of the Rhine to the Elbe. The most important are the Sugambri and the Cimbri’ (VII.2.4). Here the Cimbri are placed between the Weser and the Elbe (and possibly mistaken for the Chauci?). Strabo adds that the regions on the far side of the Elbe and near the ocean (the Baltic) are unknown to the Romans, as are regions further towards the east. Strabo also says that the ‘Hermondori’ and the ‘Longobardi’ have moved to the far side of the Elbe (no doubt owing to Roman pressure) (VII.1.3). As in Caesar’s account, large-scale movement of peoples and massive fighting with huge casualties are clearly taking place as a result of the Roman expansion. Indeed, the attempted Roman expansion into northwestern Germany is no doubt the deeper reason why the notion of the Cimbri and the Teutones was resurrected in this period and why the two nations gradually found a legendary home in the north, even if the literary interest in them on the part of the Romans dwindled again quite soon after: the Cimbri and the Teutones did not have a part in the north European political landscape of the earlier Imperial Roman period.

The Roman Marcus Velleius Paterculus (19 BC–AD 30) merely compares the disaster in the Teutoburg Forest in AD 9 with the ancient threat of the Cimbri and Teutones (II.120). Paterculus served as a senior cavalry officer under Tiberius from AD 4 during the latter’s campaigns in Germany and elsewhere. Another Roman, Pomponius Mela (died c. AD 45), writing his *De situ orbis libri III* in about AD 43

(incidentally, the first year of the Roman conquest of Britain), describes the eastern North Sea (and the western Baltic?) as where 'the Cimbri and the Teutones are living' (III.3.31).

Gaius Plinius Secundus, Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79), in his *Naturalis Historia*, claims that a main division of the Germans, the Ingaevones, comprised the Cimbri, the Teutones and the Chauci (in northwestern Germany) (IV.96). Pliny also mentions the Cimbrian Promontory (the Jylland peninsula or just its northern or even northernmost part) which, together with the Saevo mountain or mountains (in Norway), forms an enormous bay studded with islands, indeed the Baltic Sea (IV.XIII.94f.).

Pliny too was a senior officer in the German borderlands, serving there for more than ten years from AD 46 onwards, and even taking on a fighting role. Citing Pytheas, from the end of the fourth century BC, Pliny says that the inhabitants of an extremely broad estuary on the ocean use amber for fuel and sell it to the 'Teutoni' (XXXVII.11). The Batavian revolt of AD 69–70 no doubt gave rise to new considerations concerning the Germans. Nevertheless, Tacitus does not seem to have any information on contemporary Cimbri, even though he attempts to place them in the northwestern part of Germany, 'nearest to the Ocean' (*Germania* 37). The only possible link to Jylland is Tacitus' account of Germanic *souterrains* or hidden basements (*Germania* 16). These occur in the fine archaeological record for northernmost Jylland, but have also been constructed elsewhere on Germanic territory (J. Lund 1979; 1984). Tacitus is not referring to any particular Germanic region with *souterrains*.

Indeed, the reappearance of the Cimbri – not in Central Europe but in the North – seems to be an eloquent piece of Roman political propaganda. Augustus' expansion to the Elbe was not a success, but could be made to sound like one if there were diplomatic missions arriving from the Germans. Some of these may even have been claimed to be arriving from 'the Cimbri'. The results were obvious: a

link was created between a major Roman military victory in the past – stopping the only foreign enemy since the Carthaginian Hannibal (247–183 BC) that could have threatened Rome – and a diplomatic victory of the present. The Teutonic allies of the Cimbri also appear in the accounts of the authors discussed above, but merely in the same sentence, remembering the events of around 100 BC in Central and Southern Europe.

In this process, the Cimbri were virtually put on the map in the first century AD. In Pliny's account the Cimbri were placed on the Jylland peninsula, most likely in its northern part (opposite 'Saevo'). In his *Geographike hyphegesis* (Introduction to Geography) of about AD 150 the Greek Claudios Ptolemaios (Ptolemy, c. AD 90–c. 168) names Jylland the Cimbrian Peninsula. This name was accepted by the locals and others down through history as the correct, even the international term for the region, from which was derived the medieval 'Himbersysæl' (Himber = Cimber; sysæl = shire or district), the province to the south of the modern city of Ålborg in northern Jylland, where, incidentally, the famous Gundestrup cauldron was found in 1891, seemingly confirming the myth.

Modern propaganda

By 400 years ago it was being proposed that the shire or 'sysssel' of 'Himber-sysæl' (in medieval Danish) was the last echo of the Cimbri core region or homeland in northeastern Jylland (Himber ≈ 'Kimber') (A.A. Lund 1993, 83f.; citing the original suggestion by the Danish writer C.C. Lyschander (1558–1624)) (Fig. 2.3). A sysssel is a (late) Viking Age administrative district, bringing us back to local prehistory. Such a link is a classic example of ethnological etymology, which takes a very long time to die, especially if local or national pride is involved.



Figure 2.3 Illustration showing the Goths, led by Gomer, arriving in Denmark in the year 1800 after Adam (see the runes on the arches).

The Ark of Noah is seen in the background, on the top of a mountain (Ararat) and above some Danish megaliths, including two dolmens; to the right is perhaps a rune stone; the flying figure is Time/Fate.

Source: Petreius 1695

A similar case is the link between ‘Thythæ-sysæl’ (northwestern Jylland) and the Teutones.

The popular implication is of course that the Cimbri and their huge army of the late second century BC in Central and Southern Europe arrived from northern Jylland. The reason that the idea has lived on for so long is most likely its apparent support in Roman literary sources, a support which hopefully has been called into doubt here, and which sees no archaeological foundation. Rather it is the Roman term that has given rise to the local place name. And as often as not, archaeology can demonstrate both general and specific international linkages between European elites – such linkages being a very common and highly dynamic phenomenon in both prehistory and in historical periods.

In 1922 Danish Nobel price laureate Johannes V. Jensen published his novel *Cimbrernes Tog* (The Expedition of the Cimbrians). In 1937 a splendid sculpture called *The Cimbrian Bull* by Anders Bundgaard was erected in the middle of a new throughfare in the city of Ålborg, leading to a new bridge across the Limfjord Inlet. Across the bridge an airport was built, which was used for the first parachute assault in history by the German Wehrmacht on the 9 April 1940: Teutons indeed. The story of the bull is that the Cimbri worshipped a bronze bull, later captured by the Romans according to the Greek historian Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus (Plutarch) (c. AD 46–c. 120) in his *The Life of Marius* (23). Of course the bull that appears on the bottom disc or plate of the Gundestrup cauldron has also been used as an argument towards the same ends (Fig. 2.2). However, the date of the manufacture of the cauldron may well be the first century BC, even its latter half. If so, any link with the Cimbri fighting in Central Europe before 100 BC can be ruled out (cf. data in e.g. Hoddinott 1981; Oberleitner *et al.* 1981; for a richly referenced general overview of Southeastern Europe in the latter half of the first millennium BC, see e.g. Randsborg 1993).

The myth of the Goths

A similar, and equally dramatic case, concerns Tacitus' 'Gotones' (mentioned in *Germania* as living in central Poland), which may well be linked with the Goths arriving in the northern Black Sea region in the later third century AD (*Germania* 43). The subsequent linkage with the Geats (or Göter) in Central Sweden is a highly unhappy construction, however readily it has been taken up in later times and even today (cf. Christensen 2002; and see Chapter 4 this volume). The confusion may stem from Ptolemy, who in his *Geographike* places the Goutai on the island, or in fact the peninsula, of Scandia or Scandinavia.

Roman support for this identification comes in the form of a work by the Roman/Gothic writer Jordanes, *De origine actibusque Getarum* (The Origin and Deeds of the Getae) of about 551 AD (Jordanes' 'Geats' are in fact Goths). Jordanes based his Getae on a lost work by Cassiodorus (c. AD 485–c. 585). Cassiodorus was a high-ranking administrator at the court of Ostrogothic King Theoderic the Great (died AD 526; see below). Obviously, the Ostrogoths were constructing an impressive history of their own nation, supposedly going back even to the Early Bronze Age and starting with another migration from Scandinavia. There is nothing linking the Gothes with Sweden in any other way than common elite contact, which was taking place between many regions in Europe, both before and certainly after the period in question (Christensen 2002, 299f.).

A barmy link between Genesis, the Cimbri and the Goths has even been suggested by a Danish historical writer of an early period (Petreius 1695) (Fig. 2.3). Indeed, there has been no end to the use and misuse of the Goths, not least in Sweden, ever since the Middle Ages. As early as 1434, at a meeting in Basel, a Swedish bishop managed to persuade the assembly that he should be seated at the front in deference to his royal house (Klindt-Jensen 1975, 11). The only contender for the position was a Spanish bishop who claimed the

same with reference to the Visigothic past of his country. History, imagined or real, is always a strong factor in the sometimes shameless rivalry among nations and people.

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Nations and Alliances

The Ethnography of Tacitus' *Germania*

Reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt. Nec regibus infinita aut libera potestas, et duces exemplo potius quam imperio, si prompti, si conspicui, si ante aciem agant, admiratione praesunt. Ceterum neque animadvertere neque vincere, ne verberare quidem nisi sacerdotibus permissum, non quasi in poenam nec ducis iussu, sed velut deo imperante, quem adesse bellantibus credunt. Effigiesque et signa quaedam detracta lucis in proelium ferunt; quodque praecipuum fortitudinis incitamentum est, non casus, nec fortuita conglobatio turmam aut cuneum facit, sed familiae et propinquitates; et in proximo pignora, unde feminarum ululatus audiri, unde vagitus infantium. Hi cuique sanctissimi testes, hi maximi laudatores. Ad matres, ad coniuges vulnera ferunt; nec illae numerare aut exigere plagas pavent, cibosque et hortamina pugnantibus gestant.

Tacitus on the Germans, *Germania* Book 7

Chieftdoms once more

The general conditions of living, the types of resources and the organization of work, indeed the whole character of Bronze Age society no doubt varied quite dramatically between the city-states, empires and civilizations in the Near East and the eastern Mediterranean, the less centralized Central Europe, and the North,

among other regions (e.g. Kristiansen and Larsson 2005). The North, despite a lack of natural sources of gold, copper and tin, maintained close contacts with other parts of Europe for exactly this reason. Other parts of the Continent were less fortunate, living outside Bronze Age society simply in terms of metal supply.

Apart from metals and a few other substances (such as rare amber and pottery in the Mediterranean), geographical patterns of exchange are difficult to establish. Balances of trade present even greater difficulties. Baltic amber has been suggested as a costly trade item for the North, regarded as having magical properties, but was fairly rare in the more southern parts of Europe before the beginning of the Iron Age. Recently, the surprisingly high prices of textiles, including woollen ones, in Near Eastern Late Bronze Age texts has been called to attention (Randsborg 2011a). If they also applied to the North, such high prices would have provided this marginal but highly productive region with means to acquire its indisputable wealth in bronzes and gold.

There is general agreement, supported by written sources, that Mediterranean societies were hierarchical in the Bronze Age, governed by kings and princes, and even emperors. Following the traditional evolutionary argument, societies in Central Europe would have been 'chiefdoms'. This is a term that is often left rather loosely defined, stressing wealth and rank differences, including the existence of particular status symbols, which are quite easily detected by archaeologists, and is translated into 'social stratification'. Another factor is the supposed presence of 'centres' (meeting places at minimum, but maybe also permanent administrative foci), which can also be easily detected. A particular problem in approaching chiefdoms from an archaeological perspective is that differences in rank and wealth, as well as the existence of centres, also occur in other types of societies, both less and more complex than the supposed 'chiefdoms'.

Difficult to demonstrate by archaeological means, chiefdoms are also generally supposed to be hereditary political bodies. In chiefdoms, materials and produce, even particular items, are believed to have been harvested by the 'chief' in the form of tribute and used, for instance, in long-distance exchanges at the higher social level. Such trade presupposes contact and agreement, as the presence of so many foreign artefacts in the North indicates. Indeed, the North, at least the greater Danish region, is usually given the same societal status as the 'chiefdoms' of Central Europe.

In traditional evolutionary schemes, going back to the nineteenth century, chiefdoms are placed between the rather more egalitarian 'tribes' and 'states'. Such classification is helpful even today when it comes to imagining the social forms that were responsible for archaeological finds and drawing inferences for further research. However, it does not offer much assistance in particular historical situations. While small and fairly simple societies in various forms are an indisputable fact, as are advanced kingdoms and empires, the realities behind 'chiefdoms' are difficult to grasp, as is much of the other 'complexity' in world history. On the one hand, chiefdoms are like small 'kingdoms'; on the other they are not supposed to be like 'states', the latter term presupposing the existence of a number of the standard characteristics of 'civilizations', such as writing, monumental architecture, monetary systems, professional armies and the like, according to the traditional definitions.

A particular problem is that 'chiefdoms' seem to be mainly prehistoric, if they are not in fact mere figments of imagination. Thus, we have few ways of actually knowing what was going on in such societies: there is no one to ask, as in so much other prehistoric archaeology. Nevertheless, a few written sources concerning the Central European Iron Age indicate that we are quite a long way from the traditional notions of chiefdoms, while at the same time still missing the defining elements of 'civilization'. Among the written

sources are Caesar's own *Commentaries on the Gallic War* from the mid-first century BC (mostly concerning Celtic societies, however), and Tacitus' so-called *Germania* some 150 years later.

Germanic society according to Tacitus

Tacitus' *Germania*, with its political and other geography, continues to occupy the imagination even today. The geography is a particularly difficult area but it should not overshadow the rich and seemingly reliable information on ancient Germanic society that can be gathered from the work and has generally been confirmed by archaeology.

According to Tacitus, the Germanic societies were quite large and culturally connected. They had substantial populations scattered across wide regions. There were laws, or rather rules, even criminal codes, 'communal' divisions, councils of representatives, free men and slaves, and priesthoods. Differences in rank (either won through merit, or inherited by birth) are noted, as are meeting places and sacred locations. Moral codices were well established, centred on concepts of rights and honour. Hospitality was sacred and exchange of gifts very important. Costly foreign items served to fortify local society, not to challenge it or change its course. Tacitus is particularly informative on matters of religious beliefs, including deities in the shape of human beings.

Settlements were scattered in 'Germania', but were rich in cattle and other resources, and house structures were not interlinked (as was the case in Roman settlements). Adult males carried shields and spears, the latter called *framea* by Tacitus (possibly derived from a word meaning 'forward'), and occasionally also swords. The coloured shield was a sacred symbol of warriorhood. The armies were large and were organized along kinship lines, led by interim leaders and warlords. The entire social structure seems to be one of cooperation and

collaboration. On the personal level we may speak of brotherhoods: a leader and his devoted group, and societies made up of the same, thus lacking in the autocratic command structures known for instance from the Romans, in society as well as in the army.

The question is whether Tacitus' description of Early Iron Age society is not in better accordance with archaeological and social realities than the above-mentioned traditional notions of the 'chiefdom' advocated by several scholars (cf. Klejnstrup-Jensen 1974). Even the existence of 'centres', for instance in the form of meeting places, is not necessarily an argument for seeing such societies as 'chiefdoms'. Indeed, centres may occupy the whole spectrum from meeting places (*things* is the Nordic word for such places) in simple societies to 'palaces' with adjacent semi-urban or urban environments. A second, related question is whether such a model would not fit the Bronze Age as well, in particular its later part.

No doubt there were attempts at breaking the 'rules', under the impact for instance of new wealth from trade, which may have permitted rulers to create kingdoms, including particular personal centres or 'manor houses', with adjacent estates. Tacitus himself hints at the existence of 'system-breakers' among the Suiones (on the Danish Islands, it is suggested); in fact he does so every time he mentions 'kings' ('*rex/reges*') among Germanic nations, which he does for the Suiones and also for the Marcomanni (in Bohemia) and the Quadi (in Moravia) near the middle to upper Danubian border with the Empire, who Tacitus tells us were supported by the Romans. According to the general part of Tacitus' *Germania*, kings 'are chosen for their noble birth' (while generals are chosen for their abilities). The Gotones, perhaps in northern Poland, and the Rugii (cf. Rügen), with their neighbours the Lemovii, both nations right on the Baltic, recognize kings, according to Tacitus. Thus, among the Germanic nations at the time of Tacitus kings occur only close to the peaceful Danubian border or in the southwestern Baltic; a region, incidentally, with many

imported Roman goods of the first two centuries AD, which have been found in particular in graves. Either the Romans tended to upgrade their 'partners', or they could only enter permanent relations with autocratic nations ruled by 'kings'.

Interestingly, the Roman imports belong to restricted classes only: rare silver beakers and glasses for prestigious drinking, bronze vessels (containers), coins of noble metals, sword blades, fine glass beads, possibly some textiles, etc. This is indeed a very limited selection of what the Empire might have to offer. Seemingly, the Germanics were only interested in Roman items that could be readily adapted into their own social system. Perfume bottles, for instance, are unknown. Indeed, nearly all the Roman artefacts found should be regarded as 'gifts' rather than trade items, probably arriving at certain sites and harbours in the southern Baltic as part of diplomatic exchanges; which is not to exclude other traffic. The metal artefacts of around AD 200 have clear parallels in the Rhine lands. There is almost no Roman pottery, but what little there is (*terra sigillata*) is from the southernmost Rhinelands and southwestern Germany, which strangely would exclude the naval route to Jylland, at least for this class of items, where, notably, Roman imports are also few (Randsborg 1991, 130f.).

Earlier 'system-breakers' were the Hallstatt D princes of the sixth century BC in central eastern France and southwestern Germany (Krause 2008; 2010) and the 'Lusehøj' princes of southwestern Fyn in the ninth century BC (Late Bronze Age Period V in the North) (Thrane 2004). Even particular configurations of the Early Bronze Age Period III in the North may reflect break-away attempts by leaders, including the Kivig/Kivik Grave in Skåne (Randsborg 1993, etc.) and the highly interesting concentrations of rich male burials in northwesternmost Jylland, equipped with splendid all-metal hilted swords. Significantly, graves of less wealthy males, otherwise common, are rare in this particular region at the time (Randsborg and Christensen 2006).

It is a characteristic of such 'deviations' that they are mostly rather short-lived moments in the great scheme of history. Usually they do not, in spite of the splendour of the grave goods, represent something truly new and lasting. That being said, they still stand as important experiments in the flux of local development and external stimuli, as in the case of Tacitus' *Germania*. And, of course, the question should always be asked about the factors that would make 'system-breakers' stand for something both new and lasting: where systems are transformed, in other words.

Bronze Age brothers

The existence of brotherhoods and alliances does not, as we have gathered from Tacitus, exclude differential access to resources and wealth at both individual and group levels, nor does it preclude the use of symbols of rank. Central to the traditional definitions of 'chiefdoms' and to the archaeological reading of 'social stratification', such symbols are also found among brotherhoods and in alliances, since these social forms would also have leaders, however temporary at the embracing social level.

A brotherhood organization of society, as we may term it with regards to leaders and followers (possibly including parallel 'sisterhoods' as well, for instance in religious practices and rituals), would allow a high degree of individual agency in the ritualized events of society as also in collaborative endeavours. Brotherhoods, it is suggested, would seek to deny or belittle differences of whatever sort between their members. It is likely that family terms were used among such 'brothers', in much the same way as among Mediterranean and Near Eastern kings and rulers of the Bronze Age, who would call each other exactly that in their correspondence (Bryce 2003, 76ff.). Family relationships may even have been real in some of these cases,

as is common among European royalty today. The use of family terms would create mutual sympathy and help to bridge both geographical and social distances.

As for the Bronze Age, common religious beliefs and related knowledge, for instance of calendars, would have served to fortify relations among supreme 'brothers', who may even have considered themselves to be related to non-worldly powers, like the pharaohs of Egypt. The constant demand for metals and other minerals, materials and products would have joined the 'brothers' in work, rituals and connections with other societies, thus expanding and supporting brotherhood networks among geographically ever wider alliances.

In Denmark, the extensive branched road networks of the Early Bronze Age, in particular in inland Jylland, accompanied by many thousands of splendid barrows, connected the scattered settlements of high-ranking 'brothers'. They would drive chariots at feasts and rituals and in war, or sail from settlement to settlement in large boats. Anything resembling a centre is rarely seen in the maps of burial mounds, as has been stressed in a paper challenging the chieftdom model and stressing agency in the operations of society, for instance mound-building in connection with special events such as the death of prominent persons (Johansen, Laursen and Holst 2004). This research foreshadowed later contributions stressing the fact that complexity is not the same as hierarchy, including some modifying the chieftdoms model, for instance by stressing networking and decentralization (Kristiansen 2007). The wide distribution of costly and highly decorated metal-handled swords of individual shapes also supports the theory of such extensive networks between prominent 'brothers'.

According to settlement studies, these brothers are likely to have presided over less fortunate members of the 'nation', and probably over war captives and slaves as well, occupying the poorer homes documented by archaeology. Along the coasts of the larger Nordic region, splendid large boats – paddled rather than sailed – carried out

many of the same obligations to 'brotherhood' communication. Prominent men gathered together the necessary resources for building and manning the vessels. Rock carvings and other imagery are powerful testimonies to this fact, as are the chariots navigating the roads of the Bronze Age.

Plentiful full-metal hilted swords of the Early Bronze Age, beautiful but of limited martial use, would have functioned as tokens of membership of brotherhoods of high-ranking warriors. The handles are complex in design but refer to only a few very large regional groups, delineating close contact over large geographical areas, in addition to some outliers (perhaps given as gifts or brought back by returning warriors?). Common imports and imitations of Bavarian-Bohemian full-metal hilted swords (the handles are octagonal in cross-section) represent highly interesting long-distance links between particular European 'brotherhoods.' The demand for bronze for weapons and tools was very high and could be met either by delivering other minerals or various materials, or using finished products like locally available textiles, well suited for exchange because of their limited weight as well as occupying less space in the means of transport (Randsborg 2011b).

The archaeology of brotherhood and cooperation

Discarding the 'chiefdom' social model in its traditional form, the challenge is then to establish reliable archaeological measures of archaic society in Central and Northern Europe, in particular with regards to tangible ownership of resources, wealth and associated rights. On the basis of observations of settlement patterns (decentralized, and with variations in household size), burials (variations in wealth), other finds (variations again) and artefacts (variations in size and quality of manufacture), it is suggested that

such societies were organized in open-ended brotherhoods with cooperation as their basis, in particular regarding the larger social or 'tribal' units of the Iron Age (in the North, the Early Iron Age) mentioned by Tacitus. Certainly, 'chiefdoms', except perhaps in cases where the leaders – as 'big men' – had taken political and economic power from the open-ended brotherhoods and alliances, should not be considered as a model of society in this context.

Brotherhoods may have contained many different statuses (both regarding specific areas and at specific levels). Also, members of the brotherhoods may not have been of the same social class in terms of land or wealth. It is suggested that Bronze Age brotherhoods in particular would have entailed a measure of collective rights and balanced relationships, as in latter-day guilds. The crucial role of weapons in 'chiefdom' Europe suggests that military aspects were central to Bronze Age brotherhoods (as warrior groups) but other functions were evident too, such as religious specialization. At any rate, there was a constant need to acquire bronze for weapons, promoting production and exchange in other sectors of society.

Brotherhoods may already have emerged in the first half of the third millennium BC (the Beaker Cultures). They were certainly flowering in the Early Bronze Age in Denmark and continued into the Iron Age with the Germanic *comitatus* (or followers) mentioned by Tacitus, or, in other words, warrior brotherhoods. Such groupings may have been regimental in organization and performance (as in the phalanx, the new regimental way of fighting in close formations that was emerging in the Iron Age), as suggested by the fourth-century BC weapons and boat find from Hjortspring, on the island of Als in Denmark (Randsborg 1995). By contrast, the varied composition of the weaponry of the Bronze Age in Denmark would support the idea of a rather mixed group of fighters in terms of their weaponry, from full sword and spear fighters to farmers using mainly agricultural tools, in particular axes.

Brotherhoods were also known to the Vikings, as is evident from the rune stones, and in the Middle Ages as well, such as the elite 'List of Brothers' from around AD 1200, which counted the King of Denmark among its members. Members of the retinue of a medieval knight may also have considered themselves brothers, including their lord in the number, as was the case in the List of Brothers. Medieval guilds were also brotherhoods, even though by this time the overall social system was different from that of the Bronze Age and even the age of Tacitus. 'Brotherhoods of warriors' – some even named as such – were still in existence in Lithuania until deep into the Middle Ages, although in a society resembling that of the later Iron Age in Denmark.

The Late Iron Age in Denmark is contemporary with the close of the Imperial Roman Period and the Early Middle Ages on the Continent. The period seems to have seen the rise of lineage rights to land, indeed to estates, as well as to resources drawn from this land. Such society was lacking in collaborations (though not in 'brotherhoods'), being dominated by hierarchical political alliances, such as those based on manors and dependent farms, forming the base of a strong emerging kingdom with European ambitions.

The Danish farm

Danish farms of the Bronze and Iron Ages, including the Late Iron Age, demonstrated individual control of crucial resources such as cattle (stabled in the very longhouses of the owners) and no doubt of arable land as well. Individual rights and action were important economic and social facets of any cooperative endeavour, as well as of the collaborations themselves, both judicially and politically. Even the existence of slavery seems to be demonstrated by dependent, clearly poorer households and farms (Mikkelsen 2012).

For the Iron Age, which saw much larger social groups than in the Bronze Age, alliances would seem to have been the integrating element, with brotherhoods reserved for smaller groups and social connections with a special purpose, for instance among leaders. Alliances would have had histories of their own, like the traditional 'tribes' (in the terms used by Tacitus) that they may resemble in some but not in all ways.

Using graves, settlements and other evidence, brotherhood and cooperative social structures are evident in the Danish regions at least since the Early Bronze Age. Burial evidence clearly stresses male dominance in terms of fine graves and grave goods of costly imported metals, including gold and bronze, right up until the third century AD. The settlement pattern of the Early Iron Age continues the scattered pattern, both individual and collective, of the Bronze Age, even though fencing of individual farmsteads was becoming the norm just before the birth of Christ (see Møller 2013 for a brilliant overview of the Early Iron Age settled landscape of West Jylland, Denmark). Villages were becoming common in Jylland at about the same time, which is probably an indication of low-level cooperation with the ambition of enhancing production.

From the third century AD onwards farms were becoming much bigger in Denmark, as was the 'private' space around the main farm structures. A common Danish farm of this period is like a small Roman villa in size. Inspiration is likely to have come from experience of the Roman villa farmstead. It is therefore suggested that lineage-owned farms were now being established. Of equal significance, the old interest in supplying the dead with grave goods was disappearing at about the same time. This, it is suggested, is an indication that social norms regarding ownership of moveable property, and no doubt of land as well, were now becoming highly fixed in the region that was to become 'Denmark' in the Middle Ages (the island of Bornholm was excluded until the Viking Age, with a few other areas partly excluded).

These factors, it is also suggested, were transforming the societies of the 'system-breakers' into new and lasting structures.

A near contemporary, concomitant and highly important aspect of the overall settlement is the rise of supreme farm complexes, not least after AD 400. These display both fenced or 'private' and open cult or ceremonial areas. These 'magnate farms', indeed manor houses, were no doubt related to the rise of new elite, and even a hereditary royal stratum in society based on estates. This development is what carried the Iron Age 'system-breakers' into the medieval future: landed property (on the Roman model) and control of workers operating on these same properties. Other things were added later: mass production, commerce and the rise of towns.

Indeed, the earliest securely dated Danish place names in significant numbers are also of this period, around AD 400, indicating a major change in settlement, particularly in naming, and thus in ownership of land. So far, the supreme farms have only manifested themselves in the eastern and central parts of Denmark, spread across landscapes of scattered smaller farms, which, however, are large by contemporary European standards. In the western parts of Denmark, a cooperative social system, it is speculated, may have continued until the Viking Age.

But regional differences in fact run deeper, even back to the Bronze Age. As early as the Late Bronze Age a regional centre of gravity and wealth was emerging in Central Denmark, as defined by the many and particularly rich finds of bronzes and golden items. These finds demonstrate a potential and a possible willingness to break away from the established brotherhood and even collaborative social structures with their prevailing egalitarian ethos, as an interest in accumulating tangible exotic wealth was created by some of the 'big men' and their families. Seemingly, however, this process did not take place in the western and northern regions, or at least not to the same extent.

In the earlier Imperial Roman Period (first to third centuries AD), it was in this central region that most by far of the Roman imports

consisting of bronze vessels, silver and glass cups and the like were deposited in graves, before such customs were given up altogether in the fourth century, most likely as a result of the establishment of lineage wealth and control of land. As mentioned, it is also in this larger region that we find the supreme or royal farms of the later part of the Iron Age: continuity indeed, from egalitarian spirited brotherhoods to military brotherhoods of landed knights, and from cooperation based on individual farms to transfers of property through lineages.

Central Europe

Finally, going south again into the ‘chiefdoms’ of Central Europe, it is suggested that we can view the Bronze Age in this important region in much the same way as that of Denmark discussed above: as governed by smaller (later larger) alliances including special cases such as male brotherhoods with military as well as other obligations. Challenges arose when long-distance trade provided new wealth for leaders, such as when areas of Central Europe became partners of the Mediterranean urban economies, first in the second quarter of the first millennium BC, then in the last quarter of the same millennium. The result was the West Hallstatt princes, who indulged in exotic luxuries, as is evident from their rich chamber tombs and flirtations with Greek architecture and other cultural elements.

Cooperation and military brotherhoods bounced back in the middle of the following La Tène Culture period (500–0 BC). Such were the social entities that Caesar was facing in Gaul in the first century BC, and the Romans on the Rhine around the birth of Christ, even including their military defeat, led by Varus, in the Teutoburg Forest (probably at Kalkriese in northwestern Germany) in AD 9. Only slightly later, a wealthy Germanic farmer at what was later Hoby on the island of Lolland in Denmark felt himself tempted by Roman

gifts. He was in fact spearheading attempts during the first two centuries AD among Germanic societies to 'lay down their arms'; that is, to exclude weapons as crucial symbols in graves, while at the same time accepting Roman vessels as prime grave goods.

Conclusions

Conflicts ensued between the east and west in Denmark, among other regions, as the large military depositions of the later Imperial Roman Iron Age demonstrate. These finds demonstrate the scornful refusal by military leaders to use wealth for personal gain. Deposited in the seam that runs from north to south between east and west in Denmark, they are the remainders of the now dying race of old alliances, even the military brotherhoods going back to the Early Bronze Age. Whoever was the winning party, the final outcome was nevertheless the creation of estates on the Roman model. These could be inherited bilaterally, as seems to be demonstrated by the equal burial status of women and men from the third century AD onwards – and ultimately by the rise of the Medieval Kingdom of Denmark.

It is believed that the introduction of the notion of brotherhoods and alliances in Bronze Age and later society – possibly even in earlier periods as well – produces a much better fit with archaeological reality in much of Central and Northern Europe than the 'chiefdom' model; hence the title of this small contribution to the debate. Possibly, such ideas should even be fruitfully adapted for the interpretation of other societies, for instance in the Mediterranean, and perhaps also in Bronze Age Egypt.

Or, to state the question in a different way: what if Tacitus was right – or at least almost right? In fact, the main purpose of this chapter is not to criticize the chiefdom model as much as it is to bring Tacitus' *Germania* into a new focus.

We should also be posing the question of why Tacitus was ignored for so long by 'progressive' archaeologists looking towards the future of an expansive subject and distancing their theories from traditional norms. Was it because Tacitus was dealing with the ancient Germanics, because research on his works was dominated by Germans, or because the archaeological correlations with *Germania* seemed few, uncertain and banal. By contrast, after the Second World War and until quite recently archaeology informed by English–American anthropology, much more than historically orientated archaeology, seemed the way forward, even for students of European pre- and protohistory. In terms of academics, this implied that archaeologists were looking towards half-gods in small, rather weak institutions; and also that academic archaeologists were often wasting their energy in mysterious cul-de-sacs, instead of daring to follow their own instincts despite the risk of being deemed 'unmodern'.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Communist bloc in Europe, countries with strong institutions and concerted research programmes, such as Germany, have showed the way forward towards an ever more expensive, historically orientated and technically advanced archaeology. France created strong academic institutions as long ago as in the Napoleonic era; Germany did the same in the period of unification, the late nineteenth century. Denmark, by contrast, dismantled its only prominent institution, the National Museum, in the late twentieth century in exchange for growth in regional museums. Strong institutions are the key to excellence in research.

After 1989, a reunited Germany – less skilled in inferences and model-building, perhaps – was ideologically liberated, willing to learn, and certainly less divided than before. Countries that are less prepared will continue to see Germany engaged in a worldwide search for cultural heritage data and sites with which to promote its scientific, thus national, status, helped in several ways by the fall of barriers

within the European Union. One of the German weaknesses is, strangely, in the art of excavation, where professional archaeologists are delegated to a supervising role, in contrast to the situation in Denmark, for example. In France, excavating archaeologists are typically trained in another subject as well.

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Romans in the North

Deconstruction of Names and Identities

... mons Saevo ibi, immensus nec Ripaeis iugis minor, inmanem ad Cimbrorum usque promunturium efficit sinum, qui Codanus vocatur, refertus insulis, quarum clarissima est Scatinavia, inconperta magnitudinis, portionem tantum eius, quod notum sit, Hillevionum gente quingentis incolente pagis: quare alterum orbem terrarum eam appellant. nec minor est opinione Aeningia.

Pliny, *Natural History* (IV.XIII.94f.).

Pytheas and Pliny

The Greek navigator Pytheas of Massalia (modern-day Marseille) left information on his wide-ranging sea travels in the northern ocean at the close of the fourth century BC.¹ Unfortunately his work is known only from quotations in later classical literature. Pytheas' findings were already being called into doubt in antiquity, for instance by Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus (c. AD 46–120). Other authors were more favourable, including the Roman Gaius Plinius Secundus, Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79), in his *Naturalis Historia* (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2; cf. Figs 4.5 and 4.6).

Pytheas is knowledgeable about an 'island' that he names *Thoule*. The origin of the word *Thoule* would appear to be Greek, while the usual rendering (*Thule*) seems to be a form of Latin. It is not easy to

Table 4.1 Place names from the later Republican Roman and the Early Imperial Roman periods for Northern Europe (cf. Fig. 4.5)

Name	Meaning	Location
Thoule/Thule (Py)	<i>Tule/Tuli</i> ≈ Carried (far)	Way to the north in the Ocean
Metuonides (Py)	I fear+?	Estuary of several rivers/Wattensee
Abalus Island (Py)	= <i>Ab alus</i> ≈ From Other?	The southeastern North Sea
Basilia Island (P)	[Girl's name]	= Abalus
Scythia	≈ 'Shoot' [cf. archer]	Regions east of 'Germania' and the Vistula
Baunonia Island (P)	[German prefix] 'Nine'?	= Basilia and Abalus (cf. above) (ninth island from the west?)
Amalchian Sea (P)	Frozen [cf. <i>amalgam</i>]	The Northern Ocean Morimarus ['Dead Sea'/a lagoon?], from Parapanisus to Cape Rusbeae; and from that point the Cronium Sea
Parapanisus (P)	= παραπανησιος? = Greek [modern] for superfluous, possibly excessive	Eastern Baltic (cf. the Amalchian Sea)
[Cape] Rusbeae (P)	= Island of Rusnae	At the mouth of the Neman/Nemunas river [Memel]; Nemumas is 'marshland' in Lithuanian
Cronium Sea (P)	?	Curonian/Courland Lagoon
Balcia (P)	= <i>Basilia</i> (cf. above) [Baltia = Belt: of islands?]	= Abalus (cf. above) = Frisian island of Baltrum? [Baltia also reminds us of the long winding Baltic Sea]
Saevo (P)	Savage	Norway (mountainous)
Hilleviones (ille/illi(s) viones (P))	Those Sviones; Vi(s) may stand for force	Sjælland
The Northern Ocean	= <i>Morimarus</i>	['Dead Sea'/a lagoon?]
Aeningia Island (P)	Hænning	Bornholm (Eastern District = Hænning's one)

(Continued)

Name	Meaning	Location
Vistula (P)	ForceSmall	In Poland
Cylipenus Gulf (P)	FoodStore [Εὐλο = wood in Greek]	Gulf of Gdąnsk; or Westernmost Baltic Sea
Latris Island (P)	Handmaid; or from <i>latro</i> : mercenary soldier	(Pen)insula closing the Gulf of Gdąnsk? Or Island of Lolland?
Lagnus Gulf (P)	≈ <i>Ille agnus</i> : 'meek/shallow'; - <i>gn</i> - may point to Old Norse for 'calm' (<i>logn/lugn</i>)	The Kattegat, since on the 'Cimbrian frontier'? Cf. the major island of Læsø = Lee Sea
Tastris/Cartris Peninsula, part of the Cimbrian Promontory (P)	1. <i>T-astris</i> ? conjugation of Star; 2. <i>Carta</i> = paper; 3. <i>C-artris</i> ? conjugation of plough	The very tip of Jylland (Grenen: 'branch' in Danish, 'ploughing' the sea and separating the North Sea from the Kattegat, the waves meeting dramatically just off Grenen)
Burcana Island (P)	[German prefix] Channel? = 'Bean Island' of the Romans	Wattensee = Frisian island of Borkum?
'Glass Island' (P)	Named after its amber; called 'Austeravia' by the Germans ≈ Southern Road/Southern; <i>Aust</i> = East in Old Norse	
Actania Island (P)	Seashore	Wattensee
Codanus Bay (M; P)	Animal Tail [<i>Coda/Cauda</i>]	'Above' the Elbe/Kattegat-Baltic Sea region
[Orcaes (M)	?	The Orkneys]
Hæmodes Islands (seven) (M) = the Acmodae (P)	≈ Hae Modes = These Modes	Opposite Germania = the main Danish Islands, excluding Bornholm
[cf. Hebdomades]	[= Seven Isles]	
Codanavia Island (M)	Cf. Codanus above	
= Scatinavia Island (M)	≈ Scandare/Navis (<i>navem</i>) (= to board a ship)	The Scandinavian Peninsula
Viadus	Traveller	Oder River
Albis (T)	≈ White	Elbe River
Mare Suebicum (T)	SeaSvebian	Baltic Sea

Sources: (M) = Mela; (Py) = Pytheas; (P) = Pliny; (T) = Tacitus (*Germania*)

Table 4.2 Names of nations, mainly in the northern parts of ‘Germania’ (Northern Europe), from the later Republican Roman and the Early Imperial Roman periods (cf. Fig. 4.6)

Name	Meaning	Location
Teutoni (P)	‘People’ (in Old German)	Northwestern Europe (likely a generic term)
Guiones (P) = In-Guaeones or Ingaevones (T)	Germanic term derived from [Yngvi], son of mythological Mannus, son of Tuisto, ancestor of the Germanic peoples (cf. Tacitus Book 2)	German nations north of the Rhine
Gotones/Gutones (T)	Good/God (in Old German)	In Central Poland
Suiones (P; T)	≈ <i>ille viones</i> = the forceful?	Central Denmark (the Islands/Sjælland)
Aesti (T)	Related to <i>aes</i> (copper coin)? Or, to <i>aestuario</i> (cf. estuary)?	Southern eastern Baltic
Fenni (= Finni) (T) Rugii (T)	Related to <i>finis</i> (end)? Cf. <i>ruga</i> = wrinkle	Northern eastern Baltic Rügen island (Rugia), many lobes
Lemovii (T)	≈ (<i>il</i>) <i>le movi</i> (The Moving)?	German/Polish borderlands on the Baltic
Sitones (T) Langobardi (T)	≈ The Placed? The Long Bearded (/slow?)	Sweden, likely Gotland Middle Elbe
Reudingi (T) Aviones (T) Anglii (T)	The Again Worthy? The Lonely (cf. <i>avius</i>) The Cornered (cf. <i>angulus</i>)	In Holstein? Frisians? In Southern Slesvig
Varini (T)	The Various/Varied (cf. <i>varius</i>)	Northern Slesvig
Eudoses (cf. Eutii = Jutes) (T)	The Wet (cf. <i>udos</i>)	Central Jylland
Suarines (T) Nuitones (T)	The Pleasant (cf. <i>suavis</i>) The Vanished (cf. <i>nuit</i>)	Mecklenburg? Mecklenburg/ Vorpommern?

Sources: (M) = Mela; (Py) = Pytheas; (P) = Pliny; (T) = Tacitus (*Germania*)

establish the meaning of the place name, since there is no obviously corresponding substantive in proper Greek or Latin.² Therefore, an invented or mythical name for the location of Thoule/Thule/Tule/Tuli (etc.) seems to be the best suggestion.

Thoule is six days' sailing from Britain and near the frozen sea, according to Pytheas: perhaps Norway around the Trondheim Inlet, or even further north (rather than Iceland!). Pytheas states that Thule has no nights at midsummer, which of course is a truthful observation concerning the far north. In *De vita et moribus Iulii Agricolae* ('Agricola', of c. AD 98) by Publius (or Gaius) Cornelius Tacitus (AD 56–117) 'Thule' may be the Shetland Islands (Book 10). However, Shetland sees no midsummer night sun, only 'white summer nights'. Thus, in *Agricola*, 'Thule' is clearly a geographical concept – 'far, far away, and we do not know much about it (or, in fact, anything at all)' – rather than a particular location.

Pytheas also knows about amber, but the question is from where. As we note from the following, Pytheas was probably visiting the Frisian 'Wattensee coast' of the North Sea. Citing Pytheas, Pliny says that the inhabitants of an enormous 'estuary' – *Metuonides* [I fear+? (*nisi* is island in Greek)] – on the Ocean [width of 6,000 stadia, or a minimum of six days' sailing: no doubt the entire 'Wattensee'] are using amber for fuel, as well as selling amber to the *Teutoni* (XXXVII.11). The local people are called *Guiones*, which is often taken for 'Goths' (although another explanation is given below). According to Tacitus in his *Germania* (*De Origine et Situ Germanorum*/Concerning the Origin and Situation of the Germanics) of c. AD 98, the *Gotones* are living on the middle part of the Vistula (43).

Pliny himself says that a section of the Germans, the *Inguaeones*, comprising the *Cimbri*, the *Teutoni* and the *Chauci*, live north of the Rhine (IV.14): with Pliny we are in the first century AD period of literary revival of the Cimbri and Teutones; see also the discussion below under Pomponius Mela. Identification of the *Guiones* with the

'*In-Guaeones*' is thus perfectly possible, they are in fact the *Ingaevones* of Tacitus' *Germania* (2).

Pliny also quotes Pytheas concerning the island of *Abalus* [= *alus*?/Latin for fromother]. *Abalus* is one day's crossing from the coast, and amber is carried there in the spring by currents. *Abalus* may well be Heligoland (or any of the other Frisian Islands). The Greek Timaeus (c. 345–c. 250 BC) is said to have called *Abalus* *Basilis*, which in Latin is a female first name. (It should perhaps also be noted that *basilica* is Latin for an official hall.)

'Scythia', to the classical authors, is a changing geographical region. To the authors of early Imperial Rome, having defined 'Germany', Scythia begins to the east of *Germania*, at the estuary of the Vistula; to earlier authors it may well have comprised both the eastern and northern parts of 'Germany'. In another part of his work Pliny says that Timaeus relates that there is an island called *Baunonia* [Latin for (German prefix) Nine, or derivative?], lying off Scythia at a day's crossing from the coast, on the beach of which in the spring amber is cast up by the waves (IV.13). This is evidently the same story as told above about *Abalus/Basilis*.

Speaking about the Northern Ocean, Pliny relates that the Greek Hecataeus (c. 350–290 BC) calls this the Amalchian Sea, which is the local tongue for 'frozen' [in fact, the 'tongue' is rather Greek, cf. *amalgam*]. Pliny adds that another Greek writer, Philemon (c. 362–262 BC) says that the 'Cimbrian' name for it is *Morimarusa*, or the 'Death Sea' [likely a lagoon, cf. below], from the River *Parapanisus* [Παραπανησιος = 'superfluous' in (modern) Greek; here possibly 'excessive'] to Cape *Rusbeae* [cf. the island of *Rusnae* at the mouth of the River *Neman/Nemunas* (or *Memel*, in German), emptying into the *Curonian Lagoon*]. And from that point onwards, Pliny says, it is the *Cronium* Sea [the *Curonian* or *Courland Lagoon*, if not the Baltic off *Courland/Western Latvia*]. In Old Lithuanian, *Nemunas* means 'marshland'. Certainly, the lower course of *Nemunas* goes

through wide marshes. Also, to the north of here there is less amber to be found. The cited details regarding this particular part of the Baltic, the 'Amber Coast' indeed, may well stem from the Roman equestrian that Emperor Nero (reigned AD 54–68) sent there to buy up amber in large sizes and considerable quantities for the nets used to hold back animals in the gladiatorial games in Rome.

About the journey of this Roman emissary Pliny relates the following (XXXVII.11). The distance from Carnuntum in Pannonia to the coasts of Germany from which amber is brought to us is some 600 miles (about 900 kilometres). There is a Roman equestrian, still living, who was sent to get amber by Julianus when he was in charge of a gladiatorial show given by Emperor Nero. He travelled the trade routes and the coasts (most likely reaching the Baltic Sea along the lower Vistula to the Gulf of Gdańsk), and brought back such a large amount that the nets deployed to keep the wild beasts off the parapet of the amphitheatre were knotted with pieces of amber. Indeed the arms, stretchers and all the equipment used on one day – the daily display was varied – had amber trimmings. The heaviest piece brought to Rome weighed about 13 Roman pounds (one of which equals 329 grams, meaning that this weighed 4.277 kilograms, which is an extraordinarily big lump of amber; the heaviest one recorded from Denmark is three kilograms). Amber is so greatly valued among luxuries that even a statuette of a man, however small, costs more than a number of living, healthy slaves (XXXVII.12).

Pliny also relates that Xenophon of Lampsacus (second century BC) says that three days' sailing from the coast of Scythia is an enormous island called *Balcia* (cf. above and the fact that 'Baltia' = belt in Latin), and that Pytheas calls this 'Basilia'. None of the North Frisian Islands are 'enormous', but the name may have survived as the smaller Frisian island of Baltrum.

Considering the starting reference to Scythia (in the second century BC), one wonders if confusion has arisen, either with England

or Scotland or even with the Scandinavian Peninsula, which is often considered to be a large island by classical authors, the Baltic Sea supposedly having an exit to the northeast. As seen from the place name of 'Balcia', there may even be a certain linguistic link to 'The Baltic', the Baltic Sea being long and winding.

Following this, Pliny writes about some islands where the inhabitants live on birds' egg and oats, and others where people are born with horses' feet; there are also the 'All-ears Islands', where the natives have very long ears covering the whole of their bodies instead of clothing. Such legends are almost standard in classical and later ethnographic literature, linked with the most distant parts of the earth and its strangest inhabitants.

From this point on more precise information begins to appear. Pliny, starting with the Inguaeones (see above), says that they are 'the first that we come to in Germany' (now approaching from the north?). Here there is an enormous mountain, the *Saevo* [Latin for 'savage'; cf. Thule in the same corner of the world] – as big as those of the Ripaeian Mountains – 'which forms an enormous bay reaching to the Cimbrian promontory, and studded with islands. The most famous of these is Scandinavia [in fact, 'Scatinavia']; its size has not been ascertained, and so far as is known, only part of it is inhabited, its natives being the *Hilleviones* [likely *ille/illi(s) viones*, reading 'those suiones' in Latin]: [the Hilleviones] dwell in 500 villages, and call their island a second world'. In fact, *vi(s)* taken alone may well stand for force. Incidentally, in Old Norse, *vi* stands for a pagan shrine, and also represents force and forces. *Aeningia* (see the next paragraph) is thought to be equally big. In fact, *Saevo* is probably a relic from Pytheas, who would surely have spotted the rugged western coastline of Norway and the ranges of 'Alpine' mountains behind.

Tacitus, in his *Germania*, places the *Suiones* right out in the sea (as seen from the southern coast of the western Baltic). As mentioned, these are most probably identical with the '*ille/illi(s) viones*'. Notably, the *Suiones* reoccur (as *Sueones*) in later sources, even as late as *Gesta*

Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum (Deeds of Bishops of the Hamburg Church) by Adam 'of Bremen' of the late eleventh century AD, who, in turn, is citing Rimbert of the ninth century AD in his *Vita Ansgarii*, obviously building on, and even quoting, Tacitus. These later authors temptingly identify the Sueones with the Swedes on the sole basis of the sound of the word (Book 4.21 with Skolion 128; cf. Lund 2000, 17f., etc.) (cf. Andersson 1998). Later on, in the late twelfth century AD, the Danish historian Saxo (c. AD 1160–1208+), in his *Gesta Danorum* (Accomplishments of the Danes), repeats the same mistake, as indeed many later authors do even to this very day.

Aeningia is otherwise unknown, but the *-inge* suffix clearly points to a German place name. In fact, one of the four 'herreder' [districts] of the Danish island of Bornholm in the Baltic is called *Haenning* (H'Ænning) in Early Medieval Danish. In Haenning, and near the coast by the later town of Svaneke, there was once a very important settlement site at Sorte Muld ['Black Top-Soil'], probably royal, starting around the birth of Christ and culminating in the fifth century AD (Adamsen *et al.* 2008, cf. 63f./U. Lund Hansen). In fact, Aeningia may well be the oldest *-inge* place name known from Northern Europe, going back to the first century AD, or even before. The meaning of the prefix *Ae-* (if it is in fact 'Ae') is difficult to judge; it actually means faeces in Old or older Danish. *Aen-* has no meaning in Old Danish, while in Latin (and this is very far-fetched) only the name of the demigod Aeneas is brought to mind.

Pliny continues that some authorities report that these regions, as far as the River Vistula, are inhabited by the *Sarmati*, *Venedi*, *Sciri* and *Hirri* (all to the east on the Continent, and south of the southeastern part of the Baltic) (see below). He adds that there is a gulf named *Cylipenus* [read *Culi-/Culina* = food store in Latin; or even, as a very wide shot, referring to 'wood' in Greek – *ἔνλο*], with the island of *Latris* [Latin for handmaid] at its mouth. The Gulf of Gdansk/Danzig is one option; this gulf is half closed by Hel (Hela), a thin, very long

oblique peninsula, almost like an outstretched human arm. There are late Pre-Roman and early Imperial Roman period settlements on Hel (Przewoźna 1965).

However, the prefix *La-* has given rise to the idea that the Danish islands of Langeland or the larger Lolland [Laa-land/La-land in Medieval Danish] are involved. Again there is no definite proof, even though Lolland is a highly interesting suggestion, since, in the early first century AD, the Romans may well have heard about this island. Lolland is linked with the famous Hoby grave, holding costly silver cups of imperial standard signed by *Silius*, probably Gaius Silius Aulus Caecina Largusa, consul of the Roman Empire in AD 13 and thereafter general and administrator on the Rhine, serving from AD 14 to 21 (Friis-Johansen 1911–1935) (Fig. 4.1a-c). Hoby is situated on the southern coast of the island of Lolland, near the natural harbour of Rødby Fjord. A major contemporary farmstead in traditional style and with many adjacent structures has been found near this grave.

The Hoby magnate may well have been a decurion of a squadron of auxiliaries in the Roman army leading about thirty men, equivalent to a Germanic boat load of the period. But considering the exquisite silver cups and the other very fine Roman items in the grave, the magnate would more likely have commanded a *centuria* of about eighty men (three shiploads), or, as a Barbarian *praefectus*, possibly even as a Roman citizen, up to a full auxiliary regiment or *cohors* of about 480 warriors (sixteen shiploads). Such a force would probably have had to come from all of Lolland, which in the High Middle Ages could muster at least twenty-five ships (from seventy-two parishes) for a king's summoning (data from the bishopric in *Knylingá Saga* [on Danish kings since the tenth century AD] of c. 1250, Book 32).

Indeed, by AD 200, at least as regards Sjælland (Zealand), Fyn (Funen) and Bornholm, the geographical distribution of social distinctions, including golden rings and fine Roman imports, may be read as an estate and settlement structure equivalent to the military

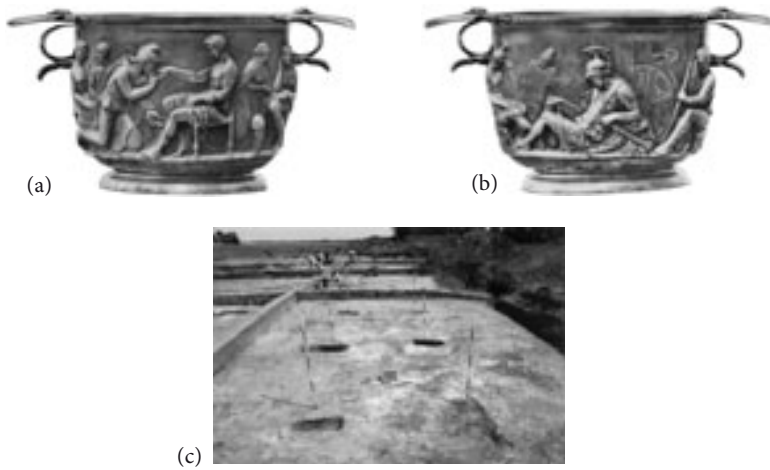


Figure 4.1 Roman silver beaker shown from two sides (a and b); dated to the period of the birth of Christ and found in a princely grave at Hoby on the island of Lolland, Denmark

The grave also held other exquisite Roman imports, including a twin silver beaker with parallel but other decoration. A major contemporary settlement complex near the grave is undergoing excavation (c). The settlement is large but entirely Germanic in character, including a group of fine three-aisled long-houses.

Sources: (a and b) Friis-Johansen 1911–35; (c) Klingenberg 2006; 2012 (Photo: National Museum)

organization of fighters mustered in three or more levels: commanders, officers and soldiers, with the latter appearing in a ratio of one to eight, exactly as in the Roman army (e.g. Ethelberg 2000, 145ff., incl. 155 Fig. 129 and 165 Fig. 133; Jørgensen *et al.* 2003, 310ff, X. Pauli Jensen, Lars Jørgensen and Ulla Lund Hansen). The distribution of fine Roman imports would thus reveal the regions delivering auxiliaries to Rome (Fig. 4.2). Other regions may well have had a similar military structure but did not deliver troops to Rome.

Delivery of auxiliaries to Rome was often a part of peace treaties. In this case, the Hoby gentleman may have been engaged in struggles on the Continent between the Romans and the Germans. Also, after

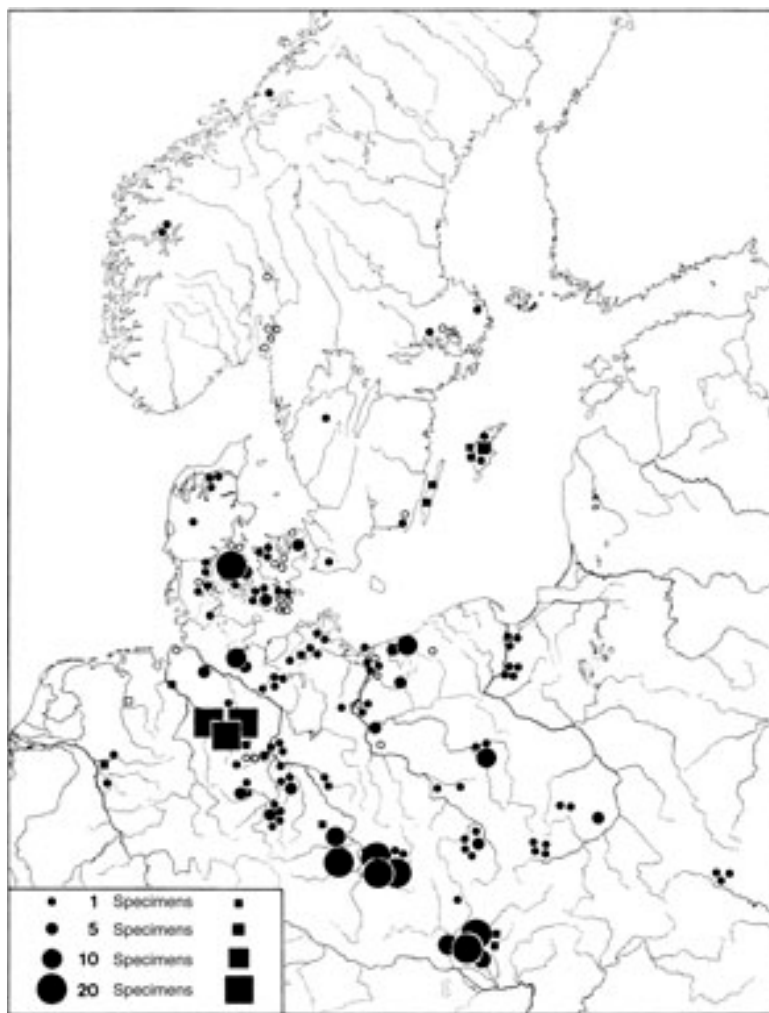


Figure 4.2 Imported Roman vessels found in 'Free Germania,' mostly in graves, from the broad phase around and after AD 100 (including the period of Tacitus)

The vessels are nearly all of bronze and come from graves (circle). Note the high concentration on the Danish Islands, the limited number on the Jylland (Jutland) Peninsula, and the very limited amount of imports in Skåne (Scania), etc. The islands of Bornholm and Gotland are also rich in imports.

Source: Kunow 1983

the Roman losses at the battle in the Teutoburg Forest in AD 9 – three legions and 4,000 or more auxiliaries – the Roman military would have striven to bring itself back to something akin to its original strength on the northwesternmost Continent; this would have been easiest among the ranks of auxiliaries. Indeed, there is even the possibility that ‘Latris’ may stem from *latro* [genitive, *latronis*], a mercenary soldier; or a Roman auxiliary fighter.

Pliny continues that there is another gulf, that of *Lagnus* [(il)l(e)agnus = Lamb? – i.e. meek/shallow], likely the Kattegat, ‘at which is the frontier of the Cimbri’. A misspelling of *Lacus* [Latin for lake] is another option, even though the ‘-gn-’ is likely to be the critical factor, as it looks authentically Germanic. The Old Norse *logn* [older Danish *lugn*], meaning calm/no wind (cf. lee), is certainly meaningful, both in terms of the sound and of the word in itself, especially if one is arriving from the very windy North Sea and the equally windy Skagerak.

Skagerak is a composite term; the first part refers to the town of Skagen on the lee side of the very tip of Jylland, while the second part is Dutch for a channel or straight waterway. Older names for the combined Skagerrak and Kattegat were Norskehavet [Norwegian Sea] or Jyllandshavet [Jylland Sea] (cf. *Knýtlinga Saga* of c. AD 1250). The name Kattegat, which is also later Dutch naval language, and which has been readily taken up by everyone in more recent periods, only appears in the seventeenth century. There are only two islands in the Kattegat Sea that are of any size, Læsø (120 km²), at the entrance to Kattegat from the north, and the much smaller Anholt (22 km²). Læsø is first mentioned by Saxo Grammaticus (c. AD 1160–1208+) in his *Gesta Danorum* (cf. Skyum-Nielsen 1957). Læsø probably means Læ Sø [Lee Sea], but can also be read as Læ’s ø [ø being island in Danish]. Læ is even a kenning for Ægir, demigod of the sea in Nordic mythology.

Pliny concludes his narrative as follows regarding the north. The Cimbrian promontory projects a long way into the sea, forming a peninsula called *Tastris* [T-astris? – thus Latin for a conjugation of

‘star’?], or, in another version, *Cartris* [cf. Latin for *Carta* = papers; perhaps referring to its very wide white beaches]. A third and perhaps better option is *C-artris*, a conjugation of plough in Latin. Indeed the very tip of Grenen, or ‘branch’ in Danish, ‘ploughs’ the sea like an *arð* (Old Norse for ‘plough’), separating the North Sea from the waves of the two seas meeting dramatically just off Grenen.

Then, according to Pliny, there are twenty-three islands known to the armed forces of Rome (Pliny is now back at the Frisian Islands), the noteworthy one being *Burcana* [seemingly a Germanic prefix + Latin for ‘channel’ or even ‘silvery’ = the Frisian island of Borkum?], called ‘Bean Island’ by our own people. Glass Island is named for its amber, but by the Barbarians called *Austeravia* [Latin for southern and road, or just southern; notably, *Austr* is East in Old Norse]; and also *Actania* [Latin for seashore].

Pomponius Mela

The Roman geographer Pomponius Mela (died c. AD 45) wrote his *De situ orbis libri III* in about AD 43, and thus, before Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia*. In his *De situ* Mela mentions the Bay of *Codanus* (whose etymology is discussed below), ‘above the Elbe, full of large and small islands sometimes flooded by the sea’ (III.31f. and III.54f.). This might well be a rendering of the Frisian marshlands on the North Sea. However, the remark ‘above the Elbe’ may also refer to the Baltic. Indeed, Mela describes ‘the sea’ as a long inward curve where ‘the Cimbri and the Teutones are living’. In terms of time period, we are in the first century AD, the period of the literary revival of the Cimbri and Teutones, no doubt inspired by the main text on the memorial in Rome for Emperor Augustus, supposedly actually composed by Augustus himself.

Mela goes on to name the thirty islands of the *Orcades*, probably the Orkneys. After that he mentions seven islands, the *Haemodes*

[≈ Hae Modes; Latin for ‘these modes (of)’], ‘opposite Germania’; possibly, the Haemodes is mistaken for Hebdomades in Greek (i.e. ‘The Seven Isles’). These seven islands are no doubt the same as the *Acmodae* in Pliny (IV.16); at least the name of the group is the same. The Shetlands have sometimes been suggested (in line with the Orkneys) but this is unlikely to be the correct interpretation. Since there is no such island group out in the North Sea, we are directed towards the Baltic, where the Danish Islands correspond to both the number of islands and their geographical position.

Thus, according to size, we have the islands of Sjælland (7,031 km²), Fyn, Lolland, Falster, Langeland, Møn, and Ærø. Bornholm (of 589 km²) is no doubt too far east to be considered with the rest, situated as it is out in the Baltic Sea. If Bornholm is included among these islands, it would push Ærø, at only 88 km², out of the group. There is another problem with identification; above it was suggested that Bornholm is in fact ‘Aeningia’ in Pliny, which is a separate entity. Öland and Gotland, further north in the Baltic, are doubtless all too far away to be considered, but may still have been known to the Romans.

Mentioning the Codanus Bay again, Mela adds that the biggest and most fertile of these islands is *Codanovia*, inhabited by the Teutones. The *-via* suffix may stem from the way Celtic localities were rendered by the Romans. The same may also be the case with ‘Scandinavia’ (see below). However, the latter is rather a Latin construction based on *skandare* (to climb, or to go beyond) and *navis* (ship) – as in *navem scandare* (to board a ship) – thus the geographical term of Scandinavia may simply stem from a Latin shorthand for ‘to go far in a ship’, the ‘via’ just augmenting the ‘go’.

In another part of Mela’s work, obviously concerning the same large and fertile island (of ‘Codanavia’), the place is called ‘Scatinavia’, as in Pliny (indeed, Pliny is seemingly quoting Mela). In this section of Mela’s account, Codanus is clearly a part of the Kattegat/Baltic Sea region. Indeed, one is reminded that *coda/cauda* in Latin means

‘animal tail’, which clearly points to a Latin origin of the name of these waters. Thus, it is quite possible that the ‘Danes’ – otherwise only appearing in texts from around AD 500 – were somehow named after the snaking archipelago between the Kattegat and the Western and Southern Baltic. Even running the risk of a false or popular etymology, the link of *Codanus* to *Danus* (Dane) should be considered due to the linguistic and phonetic identity of the syllables.

Pliny (again quoting Mela?) also has a reference to *Codanus*, which, as he relates it, is a mighty bay formed by the huge *Saevo* Mountain (southwestern Norway) and the Cimbrian Peninsula. This bay is full of islands, the most famous being ‘Scatinavia’, the known part of which is populated by the *Hilleviones* (likely an error for ‘*ille/illi(s) viones*’ = Tacitus’ *Suiones*; see above), occupying ‘500 villages’: not an unrealistic number for all Sjælland, and certainly not for all the Danish Islands grouped together (omitting the island of Bornholm in the Baltic). Sjælland alone had nearly 400 parishes in the Middle Ages, each consisting of a smaller or larger number of villages, hamlets or single farms.

Saevo, or *Saevus* in Latin, is, as was mentioned above, the same as ‘savage’ in English, an appropriate term for the wild Norwegian coast, especially as seen from faraway Rome. Thus, we should not look for a Germanic word behind *Saevo* either. Just as in the cases of ‘*Codanus*’ and ‘*Scandinavia*’, we should be open to the possibility of Latin terms and words having shaped these old geographical names in the North, just as we saw in the above examples from the Eastern (and Southern) Baltic.

Names and words

The world that is opening up after these new readings is surprisingly ‘Latin’ (and indeed ‘Greek’). There are only a few place names which

seem to render Germanic, Baltic or even Finnish terms, like the above 'Aeningia' (Germanic, Old Norse for *Aening* or *Æning*: probably the island of Bornholm). Most names are fairly close to original Latin forms or in corrupted Latin (or Greek). This indicates that we should not, like most students of the texts, be looking for Germanic sounds and words behind the Roman rendering. Rather, a number of place names are either attempted Latin translations, or, more likely, simply made up, perhaps even given a corrupted Latin form to convince a reader expecting something exotic. Certainly, we should not read corrupted German from the corrupted Latin. A particular problem with the traditional methods is that later editions of a name – being closer to, or identical with, that of today – will tend to confirm the interpretation of the original term, whether right or wrong, and thus give rise to and sustain the idea of a 'native' linguistic original.

Indeed, we no doubt have to consider that some of these place names and other terms are in fact Latin, or rather a sort of Latin, invented by bilingual or half-bilingual Barbarians (with limited linguistic abilities), or, perhaps more likely, by the Roman authors themselves. Seemingly, this hypothesis has never been seriously considered before. The supposed barbarian agents in question (at least in terms of the geography) may have been German diplomats entering the Empire or German auxiliaries with the Romans. Roman traders, if they were present at all, would probably have operated in the frontier zone only, apart from unique cases such as the equestrian sent for amber under Emperor Nero. Germanic traders were only occasionally allowed to enter the Empire (Tacitus' *Germania* Book 41 includes the nation of the Hermunduri [incidentally Germanic/Latin for 'army world' (?)]).

The Roman military certainly operated beyond the *limes*, the Roman frontier, for instance up to the River Elbe; Roman fleets were scouting the North Sea and perhaps beyond, but may not have entered

the Kattegat or the Baltic, at least not regularly. A charming story in Tacitus' *Historiae* (Books IV–V), written in AD 100–110, relates the German abduction in AD 70 – the Batavian Rebellion – of a Roman admiral's ship from the Rhine fleet (Dobat 2009). The ship was towed up the River Lippe as a gift to a famous Germanic sorceress.

Whether Roman diplomats went to the Baltic by the land routes is also uncertain. But the Hobby grave on Lolland, with its famous silver beakers signed by Field Marshal Silius, does indicate that there were occasional diplomatic contacts, most likely for military reasons. Indeed, the Roman 'imports' in the Baltic rather look like 'gifts': a highly restricted repertoire mainly of bronze vessels related to ritual drinking ('symposia'), including pairs of fine silver or glass beakers, plus some other types of items: coins of noble metals, a few Terra Sigillata bowls, and some weapons; not much more. Such a restricted range of fine items denotes personal contacts rather than commerce.

Indeed, if the Latin model is in fact the dominant one when attempting to explain the northern place names in the works of classical authors, we seem to be facing either rare Roman renderings of Barbarian terms (like 'Aeningia'), rare Roman translations of local terms, as possibly in the case of the River 'Nemuntas' ($\approx$ Parapanisus/ 'superfluous' or 'excessive'), or Roman authors inventing their own 'Barbarian' place names in an almost correct Latin, based, for instance, on characteristic features of the landscape, as in the case of 'Saevo' [savage] – very large and wild. The fourth, and probably the prevailing option, is that Roman writers 'barbarized' their own, often invented, Latin terms for Germanic places and peoples, deliberately and for effect, rather than that we are faced with poor Germanic translations leading towards the same results.

The above hypotheses are also elements of a small exercise that we will attempt to carry out in the following paragraphs concerning the larger Baltic region, mainly in the Imperial Roman Period and as

based on Tacitus' *Germania*, which gives a large number of names of northern Barbarian nations (rather than localities). As might be expected by now, *Germania* will confirm Latin as the basis of many Barbarian place names and words in the north. Strange as this may seem, it demonstrates the weak foundation of many Roman renderings of Barbarian place names and other geographically founded words. In fact, even northern Germanic names of nations seem to have Roman origins or Roman renderings in quite a number of cases, as we shall discuss below.

Latin, Greek and Runic inscriptions

For perspective at this point, it is perhaps useful to look briefly at the earliest actual inscriptions in Latin (and the few in Greek) from Scandinavia, mostly from Denmark (Imer 2004). Apart from Roman coins, there are about fifty inscriptions on artefacts from the early Roman Imperial Period, mostly imported Roman saucapans; and more than 100 from the late Imperial Roman Period, nearly all stamps on imported Roman sword blades. Very many inscriptions are master signatures from factories.

The earliest runic inscriptions – about fifty in number from the middle and southern part of Scandinavia, mostly Denmark – do not occur until the second century AD, the transition between the early and the late Imperial Period. Many of the runic inscriptions (all on artefacts) also seem to be master signatures, taking the form of personal names, just like the classical ones. The language throughout is Germanic/Old Norse; no place names occur. A few very early rune stones have also been recorded, including one from Rosseland, Kvam parish, Western Norway with the title of *eril* (earl). Dated to around AD 400 or soon after, this is possibly the earliest title known from the North. Quite a number of other 'erils' are known from the gold bracteates of the Migration Period (fifth to early sixth century AD).

Tacitus' *Germania*

The famous *Germania* (*De Origine et Situ Germanorum*/Concerning the Origin and Situation of the Germanics) of c. AD 98, by the Roman Publius G. Cornelius Tacitus (c. AD 56–117) is a small but brilliant literary work (Much 1937; Bruun and Lund 1974). Tacitus is convincing when describing Germanic society in general terms and according to certain general phenomena, precisely because he is often comparing it with Roman society. Tacitus is less certain, though, of the geography of *Germania*, including the details of its political organization.

There are a number of interesting observations on the relationship between tribal names and geography in Tacitus. The *Aesti* are clearly living on the amber coast of northern East Prussia/Lithuania, with amber carrying the local name of *glaesum* according to Tacitus (cf. 'glass' in Germanic languages) (*Germania* 45). The similarity in tribal name to the Estonians, a Finnish nation further north, is curious and noteworthy. In fact, the *Aesti* term may well stem from Latin *aestuario* [estuary], maintained in the Lithuanian name for the lagoon at Kaliningrad/Königsberg: *Aesti Lagoon*.

Tacitus calls the Finns *Fenni*; they are *Finni* in Jordanes' *De origine actibusque Getarum* (The Origin and Deeds of the Getae [Goths]) of about AD 551. The name of this nation is clearly a Roman invention [Latin: *finis* = end]. Certainly, the Finns are also the furthest away towards the north in Tacitus' *Germania*. The book actually ends with a surprisingly long, convincing and seemingly quite accurate description of this nation, or rather group of nations, almost like a visitor's report. Tacitus compares the dress of the *Aesti* with that of Central *Germania*, but also notes that the *Aesti* have a different language. In fact, on the whole, Tacitus seems surprisingly well informed about the eastern Baltic, perhaps as a result of the famous visit, mentioned above, around AD 58 by a Roman equestrian who, at the time of Emperor Nero, went there to buy up amber in large

quantities. Tacitus also mentions that amber was very cheap on the coast, and that people there were almost surprised to receive payment for the amber.

Coming back to the name 'Aesti', *aes* means copper or bronze in Latin. So the 'Aesti' may (also) have been connected with this particular type of metal by the Romans, probably in the form of payment for the amber, for which the Romans left a huge amount of copper/bronze coins in the very same region (Fig. 4.3). However, as surmised above, the word *aestuario* in Latin ('estuary') comes to mind, with the idea of the Aesti living at the mouth of rivers, which is certainly true in a sense.

To the west of the area of the lower Vistula, Tacitus tells us in *Germania*, Roman copper coins are very rare (but silver and gold coins, by contrast, are rather common). To the east of the Rhine and north of the upper Danube, and especially in the northern parts of the region, imported Roman silver and bronze vessels, glasses, sword blades, etc. are, as already indicated, also quite common, especially on the Danish Islands, such as Bornholm (Eggers 1951; cf. Lund Hansen 1987) (see Fig. 4.2). Jylland (Jutland), even though closer to the Empire, sees far fewer imports; the same is the case for Skåne, which is very close to Sjælland (Zealand); Jylland does see a smaller number of rather rare very early Roman imports from the period of Roman expansion in the North Sea region.

Tacitus also says that the *Rugii* and the *Lemovii* live right on the sea (*Germania* 43). 'Rugii' comes very close to the name of the major island of Rügen (*Rugia* in later Latin), to the west of the estuary of the Oder River and in the orbit of the central and eastern parts of 'Old Denmark'. Rügen, as well as the coast opposite this island, is lobed with many peninsulas. One wonders, therefore, if there is not a connection with the Latin word *ruga* (ablative and dative in plural: *rugis*), meaning 'wrinkle'. Next to the *Rugii* live the *Lemovii* [(il)le *Movi*?]: the moving, perhaps (*Germania* 43).



Figure 4.3 Top: Graves with Roman bronze vessels of the Early Imperial Roman period in northeastern Poland and Kaliningrad Oblast (formerly East Prussia/Ostpreussen).

Bottom: Graves of the same period and region but with Roman coins, mainly of bronze (Latin *aes*)

Source: Eggers 1959

To complete this line of reasoning with a few important geographical names: the River Elbe, *Albis* in Latin, relates to 'white' (cf. the Alps) (*Germania* 41); the River Oder is *Viadus*, which is 'traveller' in Latin; the River *Vistula* contains the word *vis* [= force] in its name, with *-ula* as a diminutive suffix. *Vistula* is first recorded by Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79) in his *Natural History* (IV.52 & 89). The Baltic Sea is *Mare Suebicum*, the Svebian Sea (cf. *Germania* 45); *Suebi* is a general term for the Germans to the north and east.

Tacitus' (and Pliny's) wealthy and autocratic, in fact royal *Suiones* [= 'ille/illi(s) viones' = the forceful] are thus described:

Next come the states [*civitates*] of the *Suiones*, right out in the sea. They are powerful not only in arms and men but also in fleets. The shape of their ships differs from the normal in having a prow at each end ... They do not propel them with sails ... Wealth, too, is held in high honour; and a single monarch rules, with no restrictions on his power and with an unquestioned claim to obedience. Arms are not, as in the rest of Germany, allowed to all and sundry, but are kept in charge of a custodian – who is in fact a slave. There are two reasons for this control of weapons: the sea makes sudden invasion impossible, and idle crowds of armed men easily get into mischief. As for putting any noble or freeman, or even a freedman, in charge of the arms – that is a part of royal policy (*Germania* 44).

The *Suiones* should therefore represent Sjælland and nearby islands. Skåne, seeing very few Roman imports, should therefore *not* be considered a part of this 'nation'. The island of Bornholm, off southeastern Skåne, actually has more Roman imports than Skåne. Above, we have suggested that Bornholm is probably the islands of Aeningia in Pliny (XXXVII.12). (H)Aenning was the name of the eastern district of this island in the High Middle Ages, holding the ancient royal settlement of 'Sorte Muld' of the Iron Age (Adamsen *et al.* 2008).

Tacitus has an 'almost stagnant' sea beyond the *Suiones*: the eastern Baltic, or rather the Kattegat, is indeed calm as compared to the North

Sea and the Skagerak. Bordering on the Suiones are the nations of the *Sitones* [cf. Latin *situs* ≈ ‘the placed’?], ‘resembling these in all respects but the fact that women are the ruling sex’ (*Germania* 45). Tacitus considers this a measure of their decline, ‘below freedom, and even below decent slavery’. Perhaps the later Swedes are among these groups; or even Skåne, lacking in Roman imports and thus setting itself apart. Later on, however, Skåne is an important province of the Late Iron Age and medieval kingdom of Denmark, only lost to Sweden in the seventeenth century.

The idea that the *Sitones* may include the Gotlanders (and perhaps even the Ölanders?), or, in fact, actually be the Gotlanders, should also be aired, in particular since Gotland, along with Bornholm and the Danish Islands (and in contrast with all other Nordic regions), is remarkably rich in costly Roman imports of the period of Tacitus. The *Sitones* may have been known to the Romans of the day for being mercenaries with the legions, just as, equally probably, men of the Danish Isles and Bornholm, rich in Roman luxuries.

Judging by archaeology, there are no indications of women being the politically ruling gender anywhere in the North during this or any other period in prehistory (despite the common importance of women). Indeed, adventurous tales, substituting for actual knowledge, are often linked with remote regions at the border of or even beyond the known world, both in antiquity and later.

In his *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* (Deeds of Bishops of the Hamburg Church), Adam ‘of Bremen’ of the late eleventh century AD, and likely as a literary echo of Tacitus, relates that ‘Amazons’ were living the (northeastern) Baltic Sea area (IV.14 & 19: ‘On the Countries and Islands in the North’). The work of Adam sees no mention of Gotland: the author is probably confusing this island with Courland (in Latvia), which he considers an island, as he does Estonia, having heard perhaps of the large island of Saaremaa (Ösel) off the coast (cf. IV.16–17). But Gotland, with its riches and truly

splendid Iron Age archaeology, has already figured correctly in a travelogue by the Anglo-Saxon Wulfstan, published by King Alfred of Wessex (reigned 871–99) as an addendum in his edition of *Historiarum adversum paganos libri septem* by the Roman Paulus Orosius (c. AD 375–after 418).

Coming back to the Suiones, the suggestion, on the basis of the *su(i)* [*sv(i)*] of the name of their nation, that they represent the later ‘Swedes’ – supposedly way to the north of the Danish Islands – which is the common academic interpretation, is therefore no doubt wrong. It may be added that Suiones and Sitones are quite similar words. In fact, the later Swedish nation (based on today’s Central Sweden) may have borrowed its name from the prestigious Suiones of Tacitus and other classical authors. A present-day parallel is modern African countries taking their names from famous old empires (Ghana) and city states (Bénin) – even in other countries, as in the two cited examples – or even from impressive archaeological monuments in one’s own country (Zimbabwe). Incidentally, both Niger and Nigeria have taken their names after a main river named by Europeans, although in the early sixteenth century. Indeed, the former colonial world is full of examples of names that were invented, in particular by the ‘whites’ (for which read: Romans).

Book 40 of *Germania* gives names for a number of other nations as well. One would expect the names to have been Germanic, but confusingly, as with the Charudes/Harudes, for instance, named in the text of Emperor Augustus’ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* of AD 14, they seem to be corruptions of Latin words, almost as if the Germans, if they were asked at all, were trying to speak Latin, or the Roman authors were poking fun at the Germans by giving them ridiculous and somewhat distorted names. (Proper Latin words would supposedly have been rendered correctly.) Thus, the Charudes/Harudes appear in Julius Caesar’s *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (of c. 51 BC) as *Harudes* [cf. *haru(spex)* = soothsayer].

Having named the small nation of brave *Langobardi* (most likely on the lower Elbe) [*longo* = long; *barba* = beard/*bardus* = slow], Tacitus goes on to cite the following nations: *Reudigni* [*re-* = again/backwards; *-dignus* = worthy], *Aviones* [*avius* = lonely; in fact, the later northern Frisians?], *Anglii* [*angulus* = corner], *Varini* [*varius* = various], *Eudoses* [*udos* = wet], *Suarines* [*suavis* = pleasant], and *Nuitones* [*nuit* = vanished], living ‘among rivers and forests’ and all worshipping Nerthus (a fertility goddess; cf. modern English Earth, German *Erde*). It is unclear, though, if this order is geographically correct. At any rate, the Eudoses are living ‘near’ the Anglii (cf. the landscape of Angel in southern Slesvig/Jylland).

The Eudoses may very well be the later Jyder/Jutes (= Eutii, with an English-style pronunciation), which could provide a possible explanation of the missing Charudes/Harudes in Tacitus’ *Germania*. But there is no firm evidence. It has even been proposed that the shire or ‘syssel’ of ‘Harthe-sysæl’ (as rendered in Medieval Danish) in western Central Jylland is named after the Harudes (a syssel is a smaller administrative district of the later Viking Age). No doubt, this is a false etymology. Similarly, the Cimbri (cf. Danish ‘Kimber’) are supposed to have given their name to ‘Himber-sysæl’ in northeastern Jylland, their supposed homeland (see Chapter 2). The latter link was proposed more than 400 years ago with the highly doubtful implication that the Cimbri and their huge army of the late second century BC in Central and Southern Europe arrived from northern Jylland. At some point in time, probably the first century AD, the Romans began calling the Jylland peninsula the Cimbrian Peninsula, and popular etymologies came rolling forward down through history until the present day.

Tacitus’ *Gotones* (supposedly settled in central Poland) should be linked with the Goths, who were arriving in the northern Black Sea region in the later third century AD (*Germania* 43). The often suggested linkage, as based on linguistic etymology, with the Geats (or Göter) in

Central Sweden is an unhappy construction, however readily taken up in later times, and even today by some archaeologists and in particular by historians, not least of the Swedish tradition, thus giving the once marginal Swedes a prominent role in Europe's early history on a par with Sweden's military role in Northern and Central Europe around AD 1700.

In terms of *archaeologically* defined cultural groups, or 'nations', the Jylland peninsula to the north of Holstein and the Ejder River accommodated four such units both in the Pre-Roman Iron Age (500–0 BC) and at the time of Tacitus, the Early Imperial Roman period, but only three in the third century AD (Fig. 4.4): The supposed 'Cimbri' in the north (around the mighty Limfjord Inlet), the supposed 'Eudoses' in the large centre, and the 'Anglii' in the south. In the Early Roman Imperial period a smaller archaeological group is placed in (the eastern part of) northern Slesvig, between the Anglii and the Eudoses; this might be the 'Varini', if Tacitus' order of nations is at all geographically significant when moving up the Jylland peninsula. The archaeological group of 'Varini' is thus swallowed up by the supposed Eudoses at the end of the Early Imperial Roman period, bringing the 'Jutes' into the orbit of, and direct opposition to, the Anglii. So-called border walls and obstacle belts in the Roman fashion (both are highly likely 'prepared battlefields') have been recorded between 'nations', as elsewhere, stressing armed conflict as an important element of the workings of Germanic society in this distant age.

Ptolemy

Coming back to the Gotones of Tacitus (and the Gutones of Pliny), the Roman Ptolemy, in his *Geographike hyphegesis* (Introduction to Geography) from about AD 150, mentions *both* the 'Gutones' and the

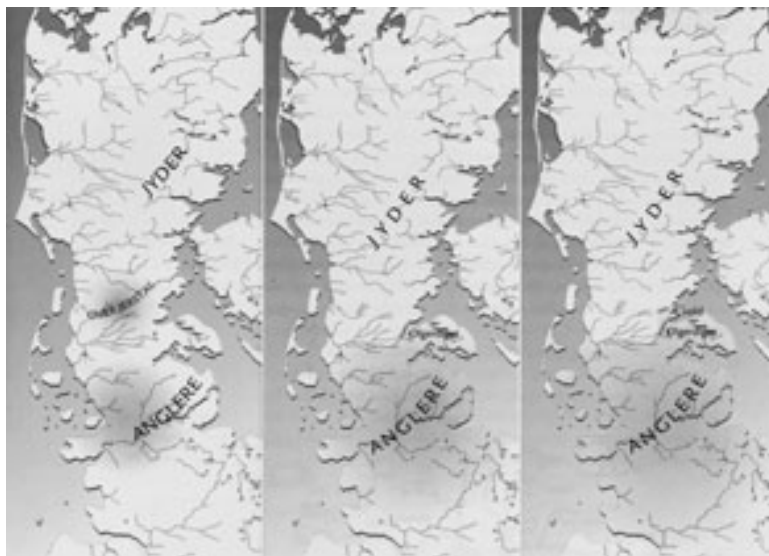


Figure 4.4 Well-defined archaeological groupings on the Jylland (Jutland) peninsula North of the 'Jyder' group (but not shown here) is an abundant 'North Jylland group' centred on the Limfjord Inlet (the 'Cimbri', if this term is used colloquially).

Left: the situation around AD 100 (the period of Tacitus).

Centre: Around AD 200, the 'Over Jersdal' group is integrated into the 'Jyder' one, while the 'Angler' group is expanding towards the south into northern Holstein (and a little towards the north, as indicated by the dykes): 'Olgerdiget' (Olger's Dyke) is of AD 219, with repairs of AD 278.

Right: the situation in the late third century AD, with further southward (and perhaps a trifle northward) expansion of the 'Angler': the 'Æ vold' (The Wall) dyke is also of c. AD 278.

Source: Ethelberg *et al.* 2003

'Goutii', but in different locations (see below). The *Geographike* held virtual maps and gave coordinates for many localities and features of the landscapes of the then known world, even allowing the reader to draw his own maps. The coordinates have basic flaws, even though much of the relative picture seems to be correct, at least for the Roman

Empire. The Jylland ('Cimbrian') peninsula, for instance, is tilting towards the east (i.e. to the right) at a 45-degree angle. Also, the Danish Islands are quite small, far too small as compared to Jylland. In fact, Ptolemy is only relatively well-informed about 'Germania' to the south of the lower Elbe and at some distance from the Baltic Sea. Significantly, it is also to the north of this approximate line that we find all the supposed 'invented' place names and nation names of the earlier Roman authors.

The scientific problem is that the successors of Ptolemy were adding information to the editions of his *Geographike* as it came down through history in a very large number of copies. An Arabic writer of the tenth century AD mentions a coloured map based on Ptolemy with 4,530 cities and more than 200 mountains (the maps by Ptolemy and his successors that are known today all date from after about AD 1300). There may even well over 8,000 accumulated locality names, including up to sixty-eight names of peoples and ninety-five place names for 'Germania' alone.

We have no reason to doubt the 'Cimbrian Peninsula' in the *Geographike*, but quite a number of nations are squeezed in on this peninsula, even though such a distribution is not wholly unlikely to judge by the number of actual archaeological groupings. The 'Saxonii' (Saxons) are a fine example of the historical problems, situated 'at the throat of the Cimbrian Peninsula' (no doubt the correct geographical location). The main uncertainty rests with the fact that Saxons are not mentioned in any other written source before the late fourth century AD, and then merely as raiders on the shores of the northwestern Roman Empire. So, are the Saxons a later addition or one of the original entries from around AD 150? In the present context, therefore, we are putting less stress on the data from Ptolemy than would normally be the case.

According to Ptolemy's *Geographike*, the *Guthones* (in another edition) lived near the Vistula River in northern Poland. Confusingly,

perhaps, the *Geographike* also lists the *Goutii* as one of the seven tribes inhabiting *Scandia*: the fourth and largest of the ‘islands’ to the east of the Cimbrian Peninsula (Jylland), probably the Scandinavian Peninsula, or at least its southernmost part (cf. the province of Skåne, rendered as ‘Scandia’ in Latin in later times).

Such confusion is probably due to mistaken identities stemming from the linguistic similarity of, on the one hand, Guthones and Goths, and, on the other, Goutii and Geats or Goter/Göter (cf. ‘Väster- and Östergötland’ in modern southern Central Sweden). In fact, any discussion of the ‘Goths’ opens a series of doors to rooms full of trouble and confusion due to the prominent and indisputable role of the Goths in the formative centuries of the European Migration Period (Christensen 2002).

The sixth century

During and in particular after the second century AD Latin and other literary sources on Northern Europe were quickly drying out. This was happening in spite of a truly remarkable social development in the North, informed by an ever developing archaeology delineating large settlements and conspicuous finds, including huge military depositions with fine ships. The political and military links with the Roman Empire were continuing and even growing, including the military sector, with Germanic officers and soldiers serving the Emperor. The likely reasons for the lack of literary sources are the crises of the Later Empire coupled with displacement of economic gravity and centres of power towards the Roman east (and south) (Randsborg 1991).

Continuing the deliberations on the Goths, the Roman/Gothic author Jordanes, in his late work *De origine actibusque Getarum* (The Origin and Deeds of the Getae, of about AD 551), made many of the

same kinds of mistakes as both earlier and present-day students when he was writing the history of the Geats (in this work 'the Geats' are taken to mean 'the Goths'). Jordanes wrote on the basis of a now lost work of the early sixth century by Cassiodorus (c. 485-c. 585), a high-ranking administrator at the Ravenna court of the Ostrogothic King Theoderic the Great (died AD 526; see below). In fact there is nothing to link the Goths with Sweden (Christensen 2002, 299f.). Even the much later Anglo-Saxon poem of *Beowulf*, probably composed around AD 800 but with archaeological and historical references to the sixth century AD, has been brought into the discussions without really clarifying them. The hero of the Anglo-Saxon poem is a Geat (Göt).

The sixth-century East Roman/Byzantine writer Procopius also reports that the Gaudi/Gauto lived on the Island of Thule (the Scandinavian Peninsula; see below), no doubt on the basis of Ptolemy's work. The historical references are to the regions of Östergötland and Västergötland in Central Sweden, the latter being the most developed Swedish province in the later Iron Age and the Viking period, as well as in the High Middle Ages (irrespective of the sublime Iron Age finds from its near namesake in eastern Central Sweden). Finally, adding to the confusion is the large Baltic island of 'Gotland', which may carry the name of a 'Gute' in it. But, as already indicated, many problems of identity vanish with the acknowledgement of several nations with almost similar names, names that were easy to confuse for Roman and later writers, especially without skilled foreign informants at hand and without proper maps.

We are in fact dealing with the prestigious names of peoples and Migration Period armies caught up in European political affairs, and travelling. The term Götaland is even migrating to this very day, where modern Sweden has decided to rename the East Danish provinces (conquered in the seventeenth century) 'Södra (= Southern) Götaland'!

In Swedish, 'Göt' is pronounced *jöt*, in much the same way that Jylland is pronounced (Jutland) in modern English. Part of the English King Alfred's edition of Orosius' *World History* (of the early fifth century AD), dating from around AD 890, is an addition on Northern Europe, including famous travelogues by the Norwegian Othere and the English writer Wulfstan. In the travelogues parts of the geography of Denmark are described, with even Jylland being a 'Gotland', perhaps stemming from the fact that the Jutes were called 'Jótar' in old West Nordic (cf. *Eotan* in Old English and *Eutii* in Latin). Indeed, pronunciation is an important and often overlooked factor when discussing ancient texts without firm rules of spelling (in addition to the very many standard problems of copying and re-interpretation). A final complication is that 'Got/God/Gut' can also stand for 'Good' in Germanic and Nordic languages, and even for 'God' (as a supernatural being); attractive terms easily taken up in other and even in later contexts.

Danes

Finally, Jordanes takes us to the Danes or 'Dani', but in quite a roundabout way. Jordanes' island of 'Scandza' is most likely connected with the 'Scatinavia' already related by Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79) in his *Naturalis Historia* (IV.96), the 'known' part of which region, according to the same author, is settled by the 'Hilleviones': this is probably a misunderstanding, or even a copying error, for 'ille/illi(s) Viones' (Suiones), as explained above. According to Jordanes, Scandza is 'lying in front of the River Vistula', with many and different nations dwelling upon it. Jordanes is here quoting Ptolemy, while adding that the latter mentions only seven nations on Scandza (III.16–24). In the work of Jordanes there now follow several short lists of nations settled on Scandza, all reading like small pieces of information

from as many different informants (or archival tables). In fact, these names are the first ones to be found concerning the north of Europe after the works of Tacitus and Ptolemy almost half a millennium earlier.

The first seven lists in Jordanes are left unspecified in the present context. After having discussed the *Suitidi*, the *Dani* and the *Heruli* (see the next paragraph), Jordanes concludes with a list of peoples ‘in the same neighbourhood’, including the *Rugi*, who have already seemingly appeared in Tacitus’ *Germania* as ‘Rugii’, most likely with reference to the island of Rügen. Confusingly, perhaps, Procopius also mentions ‘Rogi’ (the same nation?) as allies of the Goths, and as travelling with them to Italy (*Gothic War* VI.14).

Jordanes states that all the people in the neighbourhood of the Danes were ruled by King Roduulf (cf. Procopius, *Gothic War* VI.14) ‘before he fled to Theoderic, king of the Goths’ (AD 454–526). In Procopius’s work, Rodolphus (if he is in fact the same king) was the ruler of the Heruls. The Heruls – probably meaning ‘HærUlve’ (army wolves) – appear in the Roman Empire in the late third century, at first along with the Goths as raiders in the Black Sea region, and later as fighters in Roman regiments until the early sixth century (the reference in Jordanes is the very last mention of them). Jordanes records a tradition where Herul fighters in Eastern Europe were asking for a new king from the North. The Heruls are also claimed to have settled or resettled in Scandinavia, arriving during a crucial period with their supposed riches. But firm evidence is lacking, as is also the case with archaeological sources.

As to the second last list in Jordanes regarding the north of Europe, the author says that ‘the *Suetidi* (who are likely to be the same as Tacitus’ *Suiones*, fitting into both the region and historical development) are of this stock and yet excel the rest in stature. However, the *Dani*, who trace their origin to the same stock, drove from their homes [most likely referring to the homes of the *Heruli*]

the Heruli, who are laying claim to pre-eminence among all the nations of Scandza for their tallness.' Or in Latin: *Suetidi, cogniti in hac gente reliquis corpore eminentiores: quamvis et Dani, ex ipsorum stirpe progressi, Herulos propriis sedibus expulerunt, qui inter omnes Scandiae nationes nomen sibi ob nimia proceritate affectant praecipuum.*

In which case, the quoted expulsion should have happened after the returning Heruli, as also mentioned by Jordanes, had settled by the Gauti (in the North), or even before the Heruli appeared on the Continent in the late third century AD, if these were in fact arriving from Scandinavia at all! It is likely that we are dealing with a problem of claimed Nordic origins, similar to that of the Continental Goths.

Having reached the sixth century AD it is only natural to conclude this short survey into the written sources to the Roman perceptions of Northern Europe in terms both of ancient place names and names of nations. The survey has been surprising in many ways, not least because of the strong Latin element in names which normally are taken to be local in origin.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it would seem that the ancient geographical names from Northern Europe, including proper place names, that are listed and discussed by Roman and other authors from the centuries around the birth of Christ, are really rather close to ordinary Latin (and/or Greek) (see above and Tables 4.1 and 4.2). By contrast, the names of peoples or 'nations' from the same regions are less close to ordinary Latin, even though such names were also meant to be understood in Latin, or at least a kind of Latin. In fact, the names of nations are almost all from one Roman author only, Tacitus (recent rather more conventional views are found in e.g. Grane 2003 and Tillisch 2009).

The latter observation is highly interesting since Tacitus is the one Roman author considered to be the most familiar with 'Germania', if merely the parts that were closer to the frontier. Continental Germanic names – east of the Lower Rhine and north of the Upper Danube – seem closer to Old German, as rendered by the Romans. It is therefore difficult to escape the idea that the northern Germanic and other northern European names of nations in Tacitus' own work *Germania* are simply 'made up', perhaps on the basis of nicknames or hearsay terms, and thus outright 'invented' by Tacitus or others (Table 4.2). The names often sound like those that might be made up by zoologists for dinosaurs or other ancient animal species! An argument in support of this observation is the humoristic twist often given to an otherwise rather bland and insignificant name. The reasons that the Latin applied for the names by Tacitus is not correct may stem from an attempt at convincing the reader that the names are in fact real by adding a 'Barbarian' ring to them. Thus, the process is much the same as with names given much later to Indian tribes in North America by the Whites, or by other American Indian tribes.

The subsequent somewhat ironic but also quite logical conclusion is that these invented Roman names came to be accepted in their local environments over time: the Anglii ('the cornered'), for instance, accepting their Latin tribal name since this was the term coined for them by the learned imperial world of writing. A later parallel is the country of Niger in Africa, taking its name from a major river called 'black' (in Latin) by Europeans. Tacitus' invented names may even call into doubt some of his other observations concerning Northern Europe as well as part of the traditional modern research based on his *Germania*.

The chronologically earlier names (given by Pytheas, as cited by Pliny, by Pliny himself, and by Mela) – all of them place names and other geographical terms – are often of the same character as the

names of nations, but some are significant, and a few even seem to have German or Baltic origins, at least in part.

Among the significant terms are *Saevo* (savage) for the Norwegian coast; *Latris* (from worship/handmaid, or even better from *latro* = mercenary); *Lagnus* (meek/shallow) for a gulf, most likely the Kattegat Sea; *Tastris* (star?) or *Cartris* (a conjugation of star, papers or – best – plough) for the Skagen Peninsula; ‘Glass Island’ (for an island with finds of amber); *Actania* island (seashore); *Codanus* Bay (animal tail) for the Baltic; and *Scandinavia* (to board a ship, and travel far).

Among the few names that may refer to local terms are *Aeningia* (probably Bornholm since the Early Medieval name for the eastern district of the island, with an important Iron Age royal estate, is *Hænning*; *-ingel/-inga* is a typical German/Nordic suffix); *Cape Rusbeae* (cf. *Rusnae*, in western Lithuania); and the *Cronium* Sea (the Curonian/Courland lagoon). Even the above *Lagnus* (cf. the *-gn-*) may have Nordic roots (*logn/lugn* = calm).

Finally, it is not possible to observe any particular linguistic rules for the Roman rendering of northern place names or terms for nations. Nevertheless, it is striking that a substantial part of the oldest known linguistic heritage of the North is in fact Latin in origin – as a sort of ‘Pidgin-Latin’ – and has remained so, even to this day, however overlooked.

Significantly, the Latin impact is not observed among the early runic inscriptions, which are entirely Nordic in terms of language. Latin was merely penetrating into the geographical and supreme political spheres, even though some Latin words did enter Nordic language at an early stage, like ‘horn’ (*cornu*) on the famous heavily decorated Golden Horns from Gallehus in Jylland of around AD 400. On only a very few gold bracteate inscriptions of the fifth century AD a handful of Latin letters occur alongside the runic letters (normally runic inscriptions are entirely in runic letters and written in Old Norse, of course). Latin (or Greek) letters alone occur only on imported Roman items in the North.



Figure 4.5 Map of known Roman place names for northern Europe in the later Republican and Early Imperial Roman periods (cf. Table 4.1)

The geographical locations range from the rather certain to the rather uncertain, but not improbable. Ring = several names.

1 = Saevo; 2 = Codanavia Island = Scatinavia Island; 3 = Tastris/Cartris Peninsula = Cimbrian Promotory; 4 = Lagnus Gulf; 5 = Haemodes Islands (seven in number) = the Acmodae, cf. 'Hebdomades'; 6 = Hilleviones = 'ille/illi(s) viones': often rendered as 'Sviones' (name of a nation, cf. Table 4.2, with Fig. 4.6); Sjælland (Zealand) being the biggest of these, followed by Fyn (Funen) and Lolland; 7 = Codanus Bay; 8 = Aeningia Island = Bornholm; 9 = Mare Suebicum; 10 = Amalchian Sea/Parapanisus/Cape Rusbeae/Cronium Sea; 11 = Cylipenus Golf/Latris Island; 12 = Vistula; 13 = Viadus; 14 = Albis; 15 = Metuonides Estuary or Estuaries/Abalus Island = Basilia Island/Baunonia Island = Abalus Island and Basilia Island/Balcia Island = Basilia Island = Abalus Island/Burcana Island = Borkum?/Glass Island, cf. 'Austeravia'/Actania Island.

Source: Author



Figure 4.6 Map of Roman names of known nations in Northern Europe in the later Republican and Early Imperial Roman periods (cf. Table 4.2)

The geographical locations range from the rather certain to the rather uncertain, but not improbable.

1 = Sitones (possibly on the island of Gotland, or including this island); 2 = Fenni; 3 = Aesti; 4 = Guiones; 5 = Lemovii; 6 = Rugii; 7 = Nuitones; 8 = Suarines; 9 = Langobardi; 10 = Reudingi; 11 = Aviones; 12 = Anglii, 13 = Varini; 14 = Eudosis; 15 = 'Cimbri' by implication (cf. the 'Cimbrian Peninsula'); 16 = Suiones [Viones].

Source: Author

Notes

- 1 The author is very grateful to Dr Phil. Allan A. Lund, Kongens Lyngby for helpful suggestions and friendly linguistic assistance. However, any mistakes are the sole responsibility of the author, who is also well aware that the readings in this chapter have not undergone detailed linguistic scrutiny in the context of the collective works of the cited classical authors or of the very many related works of later students. Nevertheless, it has been judged useful to present the novel ideas now since these are embedded in an updated archaeological context and fresh observations from other areas.
- 2 The sound of the word of Thoule makes Τυλη in Greek spelling; this word could stand for something 'thickened' and even for carrying something thereupon. If rendered as Tuli in Latin (perfect tense, present tense fero) it could mean 'carried', among several other connotations. Fero might even remind us of *ferus*, 'wild', no doubt an appropriate description of the concept of Thule!

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Origins of the Danes

From Tacitus to King Harald

*Du Danskes Vei til Roes og Magt,
Sortladne Hav!
Modtag din Ven, som uforsagt,
Tør møde Faren med Foragt,
Saa stolt, som du, mod Stormens Magt,
Sortladne Hav!*

Johannes Ewald (1743–81), *Kong Christian* (1778)

Tacitus' *Germania* and the earlier Roman Empire

The famous '*Germania*' (*De Origine et Situ Germanorum*/Concerning the Origin and Situation of the Germanics), completed in *c.* AD 98 by the Roman writer Publius (Gaius?) Cornelius Tacitus (*c.* AD 56–117) is a small but brilliant literary work (Much 1937; Bruun and Lund 1974). The work surprises the reader with its many convincing observations, in particular concerning details that correlate with archaeological finds, and thus with reality. *Germania* remained lost until 1455 but has since been much discussed as an ethnographic text on peoples outside the classical world. We can make qualified guesses about the classical literary sources for *Germania*, but we have virtually no idea of the Germanic and other informants available to the Romans (cf. Grane 2003; Tillisch 2009 for short surveys of Roman sources

on the Germanics and their geography). Tacitus, being a prominent administrator in various capacities, would have had access to a great deal of information concerning the Germans; as a senator, he also had access to the important archives of the Roman senate.

Germania is one example of a particular kind of work for which there were certain norms and standard topics which the ancient reader would have been aware of, tending to believe, for instance, in the 'uncivilized', even unspoiled nature of non-Roman peoples. In such cases Tacitus may have wished to entertain his audience and create interest, even amusement, by sticking to these common beliefs. It is often said that the main aim of Tacitus was to counterpose decadent Roman (elite) society with the primitive but unspoiled Germans. But is this really true of such a full and convincingly detailed work? Reading *Germania*, it consists of accurate observations, floating, it seems, on a sea of exclamations (one is rarely left in doubt). The exclamations are applied to hold the factual observations in position and to sustain the nature and flow of the work: a general section (the better part of *Germania*) in thematic chapters is followed by a literary travelogue with clear factual shortcomings but also full of illuminating details.

In addition, the very rich archaeological data from the centuries around the birth of Christ, not least in the North, can be counterposed with the information from Tacitus and other classical authors (e.g. Jensen 2001f./4).

Tacitus is convincing when describing Germanic society in general terms as well as according to certain general phenomena precisely because he has knowledge of Roman society to compare it with. Tacitus is less certain of the intriguing geography of *Germania*, including its political structure. Nations near the frontier are probably positioned correctly even if their borders are rarely given; possibly, they were drawn through allegiance rather than physically. Scientific, or rather semi-scientific maps were all that existed for the classical

world. Attempts have been made to place the nations on modern maps, but often with unconvincing results, in particular as regards the more distant nations like those of the Baltic and Scandinavia.

There are a number of interesting observations which relate to the relationship between the names of nations (or 'tribes') and geography. The *Aesti* (an old term for the Balts) are clearly living on the amber coast of northern East Prussia–Lithuania, amber carrying the local name of *glesum* according to Tacitus (cf. 'glass' in Germanic languages) (*Germania* 45). The similarity in tribal name to the Estonians, a Finnish nation further north, is curious. Tacitus compares the dress of the *Aesti* with that of Central Germania, but also notes that the *Aesti* have a different language. The *Rugii* are supposed to live near the estuary of the Vistula, but their name comes very close to that of the major island of Rügen ('Rugia' in Latin) to the west of the estuary of the Oder River (likely the 'Viadus' in Latin) and therefore already in the orbit of the central and eastern parts of Old Denmark (*Germania* 43).

Archaeology has demonstrated several cultural links among the German nations, as well as connections in the Baltic Sea Region during the Imperial Roman period (AD 0–400). Further links include the existence of German or rather semi-German culture on the northern shores of the Black Sea from the third century AD onwards. In period and area this corresponds to the presence of aggressive Gothic people in this very region. We will return to the intricate and heavily loaded 'Gothic' theme below.

Roman imports, including many luxuries from the period of Tacitus, including the famous Hoby silver beakers of imperial quality (early first century AD) from the island of Lolland, have been found on the Danish islands. Many imports are from Fyn and in particular from the larger Sjælland, while relatively few are from Skåne to the east (Eggers 1951: admittedly this source is quite old but it is the last truly general survey for 'Germania' and beyond; see Lund Hansen 1987; 1995 for recent surveys of Denmark and the North) (Fig. 5.1).



Figure 5.1 Roman imports of all sorts in the northern parts of 'Free Germania' dated to the early Imperial Roman Period around AD 100 (i.e. AD 0+ to 150: the broad period of Tacitus)

Eggers' map is admittedly old but gives a statistically reliable sample for the largest region; see Kunow 1983; Lund Hansen 1987; 1995 for further information.

Finds with Roman Bronze vessels = dots (most of the imports); Roman silver vessels = open squares; Roman Glass vessels = open triangles; Roman ceramics = T ('terra sigillata'); Roman fibulae = F; Roman weapons = W; Roman statuettes = S; other Roman items = +. Note the particular concentration on the Danish Islands (and the limited amount of imports in Jylland/Jutland and in particular in Skåne/Scania).

Source: Eggers 1951

In fact, the Baltic island of Bornholm has far more Roman imports when considering its rather small size as compared to Skåne. The western and southern parts of Jylland also have relatively few imported Roman finds, scattered across a huge region.

Finally, the relative isolation of Skåne in the earlier Imperial Roman phases is confirmed by the near absence of the prestigious fibulae from around AD 200 decorated with rosettes (some of these fibulae have very early runic inscriptions) or in swastika shapes (Lund Hansen 1995, 214ff.; Skjødtt 2009; Boye and Lund Hansen 2009: various authors, in particular contributions by M.J. Przybyła, 37ff.). Rosette fibulae are very common in the rich graves of the period on Sjælland; they also appear on Fyn and in Jylland (to the north and the southwest). Swastika fibulae dominate on Sjælland.

Interestingly, the Roman imports belong to restricted classes only: rare silver beakers and glasses for prestigious drinking, bronze vessels (containers), coins of noble metals, sword blades, fine glass beads, possibly some textiles, etc. This is a highly limited selection of what the Roman Empire might have to offer. Seemingly, the Germans were only interested in Roman items that could be readily adapted into their own value systems and did not lead to changes in their social system. Perfume bottles, for instance, are unknown. Indeed, nearly all the Roman artefacts found in the North (as elsewhere) should be regarded as 'gifts' rather than trade items, probably arriving at certain harbours and settlement sites in the southern Baltic as part of diplomatic exchanges; which, however, is not to exclude other traffic and exchanges altogether.

Tacitus' wealthy and autocratic – in fact royal – *Suiones*¹ are described in the following way (*Germania* 44f.):

Next come the nations [*civitates*] of the *Suiones*, right out in the sea. They are powerful not only in arms and men but also in fleets. The shape of their ships differs from the normal in having a prow at each end ... They do not propel them with sails, ... Wealth, too, is held in

high honour; and a single monarch rules, with no restrictions on his power and with an unquestioned claim to obedience. Arms are not, as in the rest of Germany, allowed to all and sundry, but are kept in charge of a custodian – who is in fact a slave. There are two reasons for this control of weapons: the sea makes sudden invasion impossible, and idle crowds of armed men easily get into mischief. As for putting any noble or freeman, or even a freedman, in charge of the arms – that is a part of royal policy.

The Suiones should therefore represent Sjælland and nearby islands, including the larger Fyn and Lolland. Skåne, seeing relatively few Roman imports, may not be part of this group of ‘nations’; as mentioned, even the island of Bornholm, off southeastern Skåne, is richer in Roman imports than Skåne. The suggestion, on the basis of the tribal name given by Tacitus, that the Suiones are the later ‘Swedes,’ way to the north, as is the common interpretation, is undoubtedly wrong. In fact, the later Swedish nation may have borrowed its name from the prestigious Suiones of Tacitus, just like some modern African countries have taken their names from famous empires (Ghana) and city states (Bénin), even those in other countries, or impressive archaeological monuments (Zimbabwe) (see Chapter 4).

We seem to have a similar case in the famous Cimbri who appeared in the eastern Alps in 113 BC where they were victorious against a large Roman army (see Chapter 2). They defeated a major Roman army in 105 BC at Arausio (Orange) in the south of France, with Roman losses of perhaps 100,000. The Romans, this time under veteran general Marius, managed to beat the Cimbri in 101 BC at Vercellae (Vercelli) in northeastern Italy, where virtually the whole Barbarian army perished. By then Marius had already crushed the allies of the Cimbri, the Teutones with the Ambrones (likely Celtic Ombrii, their name a battle cry), at Aquae Sextiae (Aix-en-Provence) in 102 BC. The cultural nationality of the Cimbri is uncertain; perhaps they were Celts or mainly Celts, but they may also have stemmed

from eastern Central Europe. The Teutones were perhaps a Germanic nation, at least in part, the name meaning ‘people’, as ‘Cimbri’ may also do. The personal names of the leaders of both Barbarian armies were Celtic. After 101 BC the Cimbri and the Teutones disappear from history; only their names live on.

Nevertheless, according to the Greek historian Strabo (64/63 BC–c. AD 24), in the *Geographica* (which he worked on until his death), the Cimbri reappeared during the reign of Emperor Augustus (*Geographica* VII.2.1): As for the Cimbri, some things that are told about them are incorrect and others are extremely improbable. For instance, one could not accept such a reason for their having become a wandering and piratical folk as this – that while they were dwelling on a peninsula (‘The Cimbrian Peninsula’ $\approx$ Jylland (Jutland), or at least its northern part) they were driven out of their habitations by a great flood-tide; for in fact they still hold the country which they held in earlier times; and they sent as a present to Augustus the most sacred kettle in their country, with a plea for his friendship and for an amnesty for their earlier offences, and when their petition was granted they set sail for home; and it is ridiculous to suppose that they departed from their homes because they were incensed on account of a phenomenon that is natural and eternal, occurring twice every day. We might also note that North Germans would not have sailed but rowed home since the sail was only introduced in a much later time period.

Around the birth of Christ several Roman navies explored the coast of the North Sea according to the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* inscription, dated to after AD 14 (the best-preserved edition is on the *Monumentum Ancyranum* in Ankara, Turkey):

My fleet sailed from the mouth of the Rhine eastward as far as the lands of the Cimbri, to which, up to that time, no Roman had ever penetrated either by land or by sea, and the Cimbri and Charydes and Semnones and other peoples of the Germans of that same region

through their envoys sought my friendship and that of the Roman people.

Indeed, the 'rebirth' of the Cimbri may well, like the invention of their northern homeland, be a political fabrication by the Romans, in need of Germanic submissions and collaboration after the surprising and dramatic Roman defeat in the Teutoburg Forest in northwestern Germany in AD 9, and the loss of the men of three legions and some 4,000 or more auxiliaries.

Tacitus only mentions 'kings' [*rex/reges*] for the Germanic nations in a handful of cases, among which are the *Suiones* (in Denmark), the *Marcomanni* (in Bohemia) and the *Quadi* (in Moravia) near the middle to upper Danubian border with the Empire; the last were supported by the Romans, according to Tacitus. A rich princely grave from Mušov in Moravia with very many Roman artefacts of the highest quality, dated to the late second century AD, seems to indicate the existence of a client kingdom at the time of the Marcomannic Wars and earlier (Peška and Tejral 2002). The same can be said of the presence of Roman villa-like 'outposts' in the region (Böhme 1975; Kolník 1986).

In the first half of *Germania*, the general part, Tacitus says that kings 'are chosen for their noble birth' (while generals are chosen for their abilities). The *Gotones* (see below), on the middle Vistula in Poland, and the *Rugii* (cf. the island of Rügen), with their neighbours the *Lemovii*, both nations being right on the Baltic according to Tacitus, also know of kings. Thus, among the Germanic nations at the time of Tacitus, around AD 100, kings only occur as leaders of German nations either close to the relatively peaceful Danubian border or in the western Baltic, regions also very rich in Roman imports. Either the Romans tended to upgrade their 'partners', or they could only enter permanent diplomatic relations with autocratic nations ruled by 'kings'.

Tacitus also mentions the famed and fabled *Cimbri*, the terror of the Romans in the late second century BC, as living ‘nearest to the ocean’, likely on the Jylland peninsula, throughout antiquity known as the Cimbrian Peninsula, for instance to Ptolemy (c. AD 100–170) in his *Geographike hyphegesis* (Introduction to Geography) from about AD 150 (see below). After having named the small nation of the brave *Langobardi* (likely on the Lower Elbe), Tacitus then cites a group of other nations: *Reudingi*, *Aviones*, *Anglii*, *Varini*, *Eudoses*, *Suarines* and *Nuitones*, living ‘among rivers and forests’ and all worshipping Nerthus (a fertility goddess). It is unclear whether the order in which they are named is geographically correct. At any rate, the Eudoses live ‘near’ the Anglii (cf. the landscape of Angel in southern Slesvig/Jylland). The Eudoses may well be the later Jyder/Jutes (‘Eutii’, with an English-style pronunciation, or Iutii, as mentioned below).

In terms of archaeologically defined ‘nations’, the Jylland peninsula to the north of Holstein and the Ejder River (between the provinces of Slesvig and Holstein) accommodated four such units at the time of Tacitus, but only three in the third century AD: the ‘Cimbri’ – if this term is preferred – in the north (around the mighty Limfjord Inlet, cutting through Northern Jylland), the ‘Eudoses’ in the large centre of the peninsula, and the ‘Anglii’ in the south (Fig. 5.2). In the early Roman Imperial period a smaller archaeological group is placed in Northern Slesvig between the Anglii and the Eudoses; this might be the ‘Varini’, if Tacitus’ order is at all geographically relevant when moving north on the Jylland peninsula. This small archaeological group is swallowed up mainly by the supposed Eudoses at the end of the early Roman Imperial period, the latter nation thus being brought into opposition with the Anglii. So-called border walls, very likely to prevent movement of hostile armies along roadways – or, in other words, ‘prepared battlefields’ – are recorded from the frontier region, including the Olger Dyke, the oldest phases being from the period of



Figure 5.2 The 'Southern Group' (north of the 'Anglii' and south of the 'Northern Group', on the 'Cimbrian Peninsula') in the third to fifth centuries AD
 Squares = known villages (status of 1995); octagonal = trading site (with a magnate farm) at Dankirke; ringed stars = military depositions; stars without ring = graves with weapons; lines with 'teeth' = defence walls across roads/naval blockades across inlets. Note the eastern distribution of the military finds, no doubt the result of attacks from the east, the supposed homelands of the Dani.

Source: Ethelberg *et al.* 2003

Tacitus. From the same period come naval barriers across inlets, also to prevent enemy movements.

Tacitus does not mention the *Charudes*/*Charydes*/*Harudes*, known from Caesar (100–44 BC), in his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (Commentaries on the Gallic War) of c. 51 BC (II.2), which could indicate that they appear in Tacitus under a different name. The *Charudes* were linked with Jylland by Ptolemy in his *Geographike hyphegesis*. This may of course be another construction similar to that of the *Cimbri*, placing German nations known from older history, but not later, in the geography of remote Northern Europe. Such constructions, not least by the supposed scientific geography of Ptolemy, have given rise to very many speculations and popular etymological attempts at linking the past with the recent and even the present.

Caesar encountered the *Harudes* as a group of ‘24,000 men’ arriving in eastern Gaul in 58 BC, whereupon they and their allies were defeated by the Romans. Ptolemy (or later writers who added to his work) places the *Charudes* in Jylland. Perhaps the *Harudes* were confused with the *Eudoses*, considering the supposed English-style pronunciation of the name of the latter. The prefix ‘*Har-*’ might stand for ‘*Hær-*’ (army), even though ‘*Her-*’ is expected, since ‘*e*’ only very rarely turns into an ‘*a*’.

In the fog of popular etymology the name of ‘*Harthe-sysæl*’ in Old Danish (a ‘*syssel*’ being a Viking Age and later administrative district) in western Central Jylland has also been brought into the discussion. Finally, it has even been suggested that the ‘*Harudes*’ hold a name line that can be linked to the ‘*Heruls*’ (possibly ‘army wolves’). However, apart from the ‘*e*’ to ‘*a*’ problem, the latter nation only appears in the late third century AD, and in southeastern Europe, when accompanying assaulting Goths in the Black Sea area (see below). The latter link is therefore as unlikely as the linkage with *Harthesysæl*.

Tacitus mentions the *Gotones* as a German nation on the middle Vistula in Poland. In fact, the ‘*Guiones*’ had already been cited in the

late fourth century BC by Pytheas of Marseille, as quoted by the Roman author Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79) in his *Naturalis Historia*. Pliny goes on to say that the *Gutones* are one of the five divisions of the Germans (XI.37). Writing after the Augustean revival of the Cimbri and their old allies, Pliny also says that another main German division, the *Ingaevones*, comprises the *Cimbri*, the *Teutones* and the *Chauci* (in northwesternmost Germany) (IV.96).

Pliny also has a reference to something vaguely akin to ‘Dani’ or ‘Danes’, even though the etymology is historically unconfirmed, since the Dani are not mentioned in written texts until the early sixth century AD. The reference is to *Codanus*, which he says is a mighty bay formed by the huge *Saevo* Mountain (southwestern Norway) and the Cimbrian Peninsula. This bay is full of islands, he says, the most famous being *Scatinavia* (cf. Scandinavia), the known part of which is populated by the *Hilleviones* (as mentioned above, probably an error for ‘ille(s) viones’ = Tacitus’ *Suiones*), occupying ‘500 villages’: which is not an unrealistically high number for the Danish Isles (omitting the island of Bornholm in the Baltic), or even for Sjælland etc.: traditional rural Sjælland alone has 400 parishes, each with a number of villages and several hamlets. Linking ‘Co-danus’ with the Danes also seems to be a popular etymology but should nevertheless be borne in mind due to the close linguistic and phonetic identity of the central part of the word. *Saevo* or *saevus* in Latin is the same as ‘savage’ in English, an appropriate term for the Norwegian coast as seen from faraway Rome. Another way round, the word ‘Dani’ may also display a Roman stem by originating in Latin ‘to give’.

The Roman Pomponius Mela, writing his *De situ orbis libri III* in about AD 45 – which was probably Pliny’s main source – also mentions the Bay of *Codanus* ‘above [to the north of the mouth of] the Elbe, full of large and small islands sometimes flooded by the sea’ (III.31f. and 54f.). This could well be an informant’s description of the Frisian marshlands on the North Sea, for instance an eyewitness report from

a high-ranking Roman naval officer plying these waters at the time of Emperor Augustus.

However, Mela also describes 'the sea' as a long curve where 'the Cimbri and the Teutones are living'. One is reminded that *coda* (or *cauda*) means 'animal tail' in Latin, pointing to a Latin origin or translation of the name of the bay. Mela goes on to mention seven islands, the *Hæmodes*, 'opposite Germania' and (most likely) in the Codanus Bay, the biggest and most fertile of the islands being *Codanovia*, inhabited by the Teutones. The *-via* suffix may stem from the way Celtic localities were rendered by the Romans (cf. 'Scandinavia', which is clearly a Latin construction). In fact, 'Scandinavia' is probably based on *scandare* (to climb, or to go beyond) and *navis* (ship), cf. '*navem scandare*' (to board a ship); thus, the geographical term of the North may simply stem from Latin shorthand for 'to go far in a ship'. In another part of Mela, obviously concerning the same large and fertile 'island', 'Codanavia' is called 'Scatinavia', as in Pliny. In this part of Mela's account, Codanus is clearly the Cattegat/Baltic Sea region.

The Gothic problem

Coming back to the Gotones of Tacitus and the Gutones of Plinius, Ptolemy, in his *Geographike hyphegesis* of about AD 150, mentions *both* the 'Gutones' and the 'Goutii', but in different locations (see below). The many editions of the *Geographike* gave coordinates for a large number of localities and features of the landscape of the then known world, even allowing the reader to draw his own map. However, for Scandinavia and the Baltic Ptolemy knows of no named localities, only names of nations, added either by him or by later editors. Also, the coordinates have basic flaws, even though much of the relative picture seems to be correct, at least for the Roman Empire. For instance, Jylland is tilted 45 degrees towards the east. The scientific problem is that the successors of Ptolemy added new information to

the editions of his *Geographike* as it was passed down through history. An Arabic writer of the tenth century AD mentions a coloured map based on Ptolemy with 4,530 cities and more than 200 mountains (the maps by Ptolemy and his followers that are known today all date from after about AD 1300). There may even be well over 8,000 accumulated locality names, including up to sixty-eight names of people and ninety-five place names for Germania alone.

We have no reason to doubt the so-called 'Cimbrian Peninsula' in the *Geographike*, but quite a number of nations are squeezed in on the peninsula, even if this is not wholly unlikely to judge by the archaeological groupings. The 'Saxonii' (Saxons) are a good example, 'at the throat of the Cimbrian Peninsula': no doubt the correct geographical location. The problem is that Saxons are not mentioned in any other written source before the late fourth century AD; and then as raiders on the shores of the northwestern Roman Empire. So, are the Saxons a later addition or one of the original entries from around AD 150? In fact, some editions of the *Geographike* have Axones instead of Saxones, perhaps a corruption of Tacitus' Aviones (*Germania* 40, see above).

According to Ptolemy's *Geographike*, the *Guthones* (in another edition) dwelled near the Vistula River in northern Poland. Confusingly, perhaps, the *Geographike* also lists the *Goutii* as one of the seven tribes inhabiting *Scandia*, the fourth and largest of the 'islands' to the east of the Cimbrian Peninsula (Jylland), probably the Scandinavian Peninsula, or at least its southern part (cf. the province of Skåne, 'Scandia' in Latin).

The confusion is probably due to mistaken identities stemming from the linguistic similarity of, on the one hand, Guthones and Goths, and on the other, Goutii and Geats or Goter/Göter (cf. 'Väster- and Östergötland' in modern southern Central Sweden). The Roman/Gothic historian Jordanes in his work *De origine actibusque Getarum* (The Origin and Deeds of the Getae, of about AD 551) made the same

mistake when he was writing the history of the Geats (here taken to mean ‘the Goths’), on the basis of a lost work of Cassiodorus (c. AD 485–c. 585). Cassiodorus was a high-ranking administrator at the Ravenna court of the Ostrogothic King Theoderic the Great (died AD 526; see below).

Significantly, there is no evidence linking the Goths with Sweden (cf. Christensen 2002, 299f.). This is in spite of many attempts ever since classical antiquity at doing exactly that through numerous fabrications, even the use of archaeology. Archaeology often demonstrates links between regions due to elite exchanges, which is not the same as directional movement of peoples from a distant mythological region of origin. Also, archaeology is often misused in various attempts (or dreams) to produce highly conspicuous results (Näsman 2009). Even the Anglo-Saxon epic of *Beowulf*, written around AD 800 but with archaeological and historical references to the sixth century AD, has become part of these discussions. The hero of the epic, Beowulf, is a Geat/Göt.

The Roman writer Procopius (c. AD 500–c. 565) in his *De Bellis* (About the Wars) also relates that the Gaudi/Gauto lived on the island of Thule (the Scandinavian Peninsula), no doubt on the basis of Ptolemy (see below). Most probably, the geographical and historical references are mainly to the region of Västergötland in Western Central Sweden, this being the most prominent one in antiquity as well as later. Finally, adding to the confusion is the large Baltic island of ‘Gotland’, which may carry the original name of a ‘Gute’ in it.

However, as already indicated, many of these problems disappear when we acknowledge the existence of several nations with almost similar names, names that were easy to confuse for Roman and later writers, especially without foreign informants at hand. Sometimes we are even dealing with prestigious names of peoples (and armies) caught up in various political affairs; the names subsequently travel,

or are in fact adapted due to the inherent prestige of the terms. Thus 'Götaland' is still migrating to this very day, when modern Sweden has decided to rename two of the East Danish provinces (conquered in the late seventeenth century) 'Södra (= Southern) Götaland'. There were never any Göter/Geats in these regions.

In the Swedish language 'Göt' is pronounced *jöt* in much the same way that Jylland is pronounced 'Jutland' in modern English. In the English King Alfred's edition of Orosius' *World History* of the early fifth century AD, dating from around AD 890, there is an addition on Northern Europe, including famous travelogues by the Norwegian Othere and the English Wulfstan, describing parts of the geography of Denmark. In these texts even Jylland is a 'Gotland', perhaps stemming from the Jutes being called 'Jótar' in West Nordic (cf. *Eotan* in Old English and *Eutii* in Latin). Pronunciation is indeed a factor when discussing ancient texts without firm rules of spelling. A final complication in this line of argument is that 'Got/God/Gut' also stands for 'Good' in Germanic languages, and even for 'God' (as a supernatural being), very attractive words and terms that can easily be taken up in other contexts.

During and after the second century AD Latin and other literary sources on Northern Europe were quickly drying out. This was happening in spite of a truly remarkable social development in the North, informed by an ever developing archaeology delineating large settlements and conspicuous finds, including huge military depositions with fine ships, no doubt originally put on display before ending up in a lake. The political and military links with the Roman Empire were continuing and even growing, including the military sector with Germanic officers and soldiers serving the Emperor. Likely reasons for the lack of literary sources are the crises of the Later Empire coupled with displacement of economic gravity and centres of power towards the Roman East (and South) (Randsborg 1991).

The later Roman Empire: Procopius and Jordanes

Quamvis et Dani, ex ipsorum stirpe progressi, Herulos propriis sedibus expulerunt, qui inter omnes Scandiae nationes nomen sibi ob nimis proceritate affectant præcipuum.

Dani, who trace their origin to the same stock, drove from their [probably referring to the Heruli] homes the Heruli, who lay claim to pre-eminence among all the nations of Scandza for their tallness.

Jordanes' *Getica* of c. AD 551, III.16–24

In the late third century AD the Goths were mentioned as raiders in the Black Sea region (along with the Heruli). The Heruli pose an interesting problem, not least because they occur both in the Eastern Empire (with the Goths) and in the West a little later (at the close of the third century). The Heruli/Eruli served as regiments in Roman armies during the fourth to early sixth centuries, sometimes with their round white shields rimmed in red and decorated with a pronounced red circle in the middle (according to the lists of regiments and military insignia in the administrative catalogue of *Notitia Dignitatum* of around AD 400, in this case an Italian regiment, *Heruli Seniores*). The Heruli disappear from history in the mid-sixth century AD.

Although many hypotheses have been put forward, the name Heruli may in the end stem from the term 'army wolf' (*Hær-ulv* in modern Danish), and is possibly a generic term apt to wander geographically as well as chronologically. There are several South Scandinavian rune stones carrying the personal name of 'Hærulv': one, possibly from around AD 700, is from southern Jylland; two are from Blekinge, northeast of Skåne, and should be dated to around AD 600. Incidentally, the oldest Germanic name known is 'Hærgæst' ('Army Guest'), occurring on a Negau type of

helmet from Slovenia, the inscription being of about the third century BC.

Another early rune stone, likely of the sixth century AD, carries the stanza: 'Leubaz am I called. Hrafn am I called. I, the Eril [e=rilaz], write the runes.' This stone is from Järsberg on the northeastern shores of Lake Vänern, Värmland in western Central Sweden, immediately to the north of Västergötland. Erilaz has been interpreted either as 'Herul' or as a title (cf. English Earl). The latter interpretation seems the more convincing but may of course have its roots in the tribal or a regimental name (cf. Lukman 1943, 157f., with notes). Contemporary and even earlier artefacts from the North (including Denmark) with runic inscriptions also carry the word Erilaz, as do several Danish and Scandinavian rune stones from the Viking Age. If the meaning of the word is earl, we are dealing with one of the first examples of a proper title.

Procopius

Classical sources of the early fifth century AD relate several stories about the Heruli. The Roman scholar Procopius (c. AD 500–c. 565) describes their appearance as light aggressive infantry, mostly with only a shield and a thick coat as defensive weapons ('Persian Wars' II.25). In his 'Gothic Wars' (VI.14) Procopius at first tells stories about the ancient polytheist Heruli practising human sacrifice and geronticide, and having modest widows hanging themselves upon the death of their husband. This may be true, or not.

Later on, the Heruli became a dominant 'nation' on the lower Danube. According to Procopius, they were peaceful after AD 491, but nevertheless went into battle with the Lombards three years later after the reluctant King Rodolphus of the Heruli was tainted as a coward by his own men, only to be defeated and killed in the battle with the Lombards ('Gothic Wars' VI.14). Some Heruli crossed the lower

Danube and became allies of the Eastern Empire under Justinian (AD 527+). At another point in time the Heruli suddenly killed their own king,

for no good reason at all, laying against him no other charge than that they wished to be without a king thereafter. And yet even before this, while their king did have the title, he had practically no advantage over any private citizen whomsoever. But all claimed the right to sit with him and eat with him, and whoever wished insulted him without restraint; for no men in the world are less bound by convention or more unstable than the Heruli.

But soon afterwards they claimed that they were not able to live 'without a ruler and without a general; so after much deliberation it seemed to them best in every way to summon one member of their royal family from the island of Thule.' This whole story may well be a topos, a cliché (see below), but at any rate is closely related to an account by Jordanes in his *De origine actibusque Getarum*, discussed in the next section.

Thule, or the 'Island of Thule', was mentioned by Pytheas in the fourth century BC and should be taken to represent a mythological concept, often identified with Scandinavia, or rather with the Scandinavian Peninsula. Clearly, the Baltic is not considered a bay any more, which devalues the geographical description, even though it could also be argued that the vastness of this sea had dawned on the Romans by the mid-first millennium AD, giving rise to the idea that there was indeed a second exit, this too leading to the Ocean of the World.

It is noteworthy that the Heruli, at least according to Procopius, view Scandinavia as their homeland, even though they are not mentioned by any earlier Roman writer as belonging in the North. The Heruli seem to appear out of the blue towards AD 300 (and disappear in the same way in the mid-sixth century AD). This seems to

indicate that, although organized like a 'tribe' with a king (and 'general') they should rather be considered ad hoc groupings of light elite warriors, perhaps named 'Army Wolves'.

In the next section of his 'Gothic Wars' (VI.15) Procopius at first goes back to the defeat of the Heruli at the hands of the Lombards and the crossing of the Danube by at least some of the Heruls, relating that

the rest were averse to crossing the Ister River [the lower Danube], but settled at the very extremity of the world; at any rate, these men, led by many of the royal blood, traversed all the nations of the *Sclaveni* [one of the first references to the Slavs] one after the other, and after next crossing a large tract of barren country, they came to the Varni, as they are called.

One is reminded, but likely wrongly, of Tacitus' *Germania* 40: the original *Varini*, named, along with the *Anglii*, *Eudoses* and others, as living on the Cimbrian Peninsula, or in northwesternmost Germany. Nevertheless, the Varini may well have disappeared by AD 200 according to archaeological observations (see above). 'After these, they passed by the nations of the Dani, without suffering violence at the hands of the barbarians there. Coming thence to the ocean, they took to the sea, and putting in at Thule, remained there on the island.' This account would indicate that the Dani were living on the Danish islands, and perhaps in Skåne.

Next follow remarks on 'the island of Thule', including a long account of the midnight sun in the barren northern polar regions (with concomitant darkness in midwinter). Such accounts had already appeared in Pytheas in the fourth century BC and are found with various classical authors. The account is rendered here at length for its particular literary flavour and striking accuracy, whatever the actual first date.

Now Thule is exceedingly large; for it is more than ten times greater than Britain. And it lies far distant from it toward the north. On this island the land is for the most part barren, but in the inhabited country

thirteen very numerous nations are settled; and there are kings over each nation. In that place a very wonderful thing takes place each year. For the sun at the time of the summer solstice never sets for forty days, but appears constantly during this whole time above the earth. But not less than six months later, at about the time of the winter solstice, the sun is never seen on this island for forty days, but never-ending night envelops it; and as a result of this dejection holds the people there during this whole time, because they are unable by any means to mingle with one another during this interval. And although I was eager to go to this island and become an eyewitness of the things I have told, no opportunity ever presented itself. However, I made enquiry from those who come to us from the island as to how in the world they are able to reckon the length of the days, since the sun never rises nor sets there at the appointed times. And they gave me an account which is true and trustworthy. For they said that the sun during those forty days does not indeed set just as has been stated, but is visible to the people there at one time toward the east, and again toward the west. Whenever, therefore, on its return, it reaches the same place on the horizon where they had previously been accustomed to see it rise, they reckon in this way that one day and night have passed. When, however, the time of the nights arrives, they always take note of the courses of the moon and the stars and thus reckon the measure of the days. And when a time amounting to thirty-five days has passed in this long night, certain men are sent to the summits of the mountains – for this is the custom among them – and when they are able from that point barely to see the sun, they bring back word to the people below that within five days the sun will shine upon them. And the whole population celebrates a festival at the good news, and that too in the darkness. And this is the greatest festival which the natives of Thule have; for, I imagine, these islanders always become terrified, although they see the same thing happen every year, fearing that the sun may at some time fail them entirely.

Also of ethnographic interest is the following piece, both directly and indirectly based on eyewitness reports and comprehensive written accounts, perhaps from fur trappers:

But among the barbarians who are settled in Thule, one nation only, who are called the Scythiphini ['Sliding Finns', obviously skiing; likely the Lapps or Sami people], live a kind of life akin to that of the beasts. [The Finns had already appeared in Tacitus' *Germania* Book 46 and in the correct geographical location to the east in the Baltic Sea.] For they neither wear garments of cloth nor do they walk with shoes on their feet, nor do they drink wine nor derive anything edible from the earth. For they neither till the land themselves, nor do their women work it for them, but the women regularly join the men in hunting, which is their only pursuit. For the forests, which are exceedingly large, produce for them a great abundance of wild beasts and other animals, as do also the mountains which rise there. And they feed exclusively upon the flesh of the wild beasts slain by them, and clothe themselves in their skins, and since they have neither flax nor any implement with which to sew, they fasten these skins together by the sinews of the animals, and in this way manage to cover the whole body. And indeed not even their infants are nursed in the same way as among the rest of mankind. For the children of the Scythiphini do not feed upon the milk of women nor do they touch their mother's breast, but they are nourished upon the marrow of the animals killed in the hunt, and upon this alone. Now as soon as a woman gives birth to a child, she throws it into a skin and straightway hangs it to a tree, and after putting marrow into its mouth she immediately sets out with her husband for the customary hunt. For they do everything in common and likewise engage in this pursuit together: So much for the daily life of these barbarians.

Finally, and still in the same chapter of 'Gothic Wars' (VI.15), Procopius writes:

But all the other inhabitants of Thule, practically speaking, do not differ very much from the rest of men, but they reverence in great numbers gods and demons both of the heavens and of the air, of the earth and of the sea, and sundry other demons which are said to be in the waters of springs and rivers. And they incessantly offer up all kinds of sacrifices, and make oblations to the dead, but the noblest of sacrifices, in their eyes, is the first human being whom they have taken

captive in war; for they sacrifice him to Ares, whom they regard as the greatest god. And the manner in which they offer up the captive is not by sacrificing him on an altar only, but also by hanging him to a tree, or throwing him among thorns, or killing him by some of the other highly cruel forms of death. Thus, then, do the inhabitants of Thule live. And one of their most numerous nations is the Gauti, and it was next to them that the incoming Heruli settled at the time in question.

Indeed, these tales might well have been based on known relations between Goths and Heruli (from the third century AD onwards), combined with stories about and from German nations on the Continent having various contacts with Scandinavia. The latter phenomenon is demonstrated by archaeology in very many single cases, as well as in general, in particular within the fields of religion, rulers and military affairs. In fact, archaeology, and not the written sources, is the prime and reliable medium for studying contact between European nations during these centuries, however 'tacit' the evidence.

Taken at face value, these pieces of written information would indicate that some Heruli from the Continent went to Scandinavia and settled with the Gauti (or Göter), whichever way this is to be understood. Possibly, some of the Heruli were in fact Gauti. Indeed, Procopius continues:

On the present occasion, therefore, the Heruli who dwelt among the Romans, after the murder of their king had been perpetrated by them, sent some of their notables to the island of Thule to search out and bring back whomsoever they were able to find there of the royal blood. And when these men reached the island, they found many there of the royal blood, but they selected the one man who pleased them most and set out with him on the return journey. But this man fell sick and died when he had come to the country of the Dani. These men therefore went a second time to the island and secured another man, Datus ['Given'] by name. And he was followed by his brother Aordus

[Ardus? = 'Water'; both names might be manufactured] and two hundred youths of the Heruli in Thule. But since much time passed while they were absent on this journey, it occurred to the Heruli in the neighbourhood of Singidunum [Belgrade] that they were not consulting their own interests in importing a leader from Thule against the wishes of the Emperor Justinian. They therefore sent envoys to Byzantium, begging the emperor to send them a ruler of his own choice. And he straightaway sent them one of the Heruli who had long been sojourning in Byzantium, Suartuas ['Easy', or 'Black?'] by name. At first the Heruli welcomed him and did obeisance to him and rendered the customary obedience to his commands; but not many days later a messenger arrived with the tidings that the men from the island of Thule were near at hand. And Suartuas commanded them to go out to meet those men, his intention being to destroy them, and the Heruli, approving his purpose, immediately went with him. But when the two forces were one day's journey distant from each other, the king's men all abandoned him at night and went over of their own accord to the newcomers, while he himself took to flight and set out unattended for Byzantium. Thereupon the emperor earnestly undertook with all his power to restore him to his office, and the Heruli, fearing the power of the Romans, decided to submit themselves to the Gepaedes [in Rumania]. This, then, was the cause of the revolt of the Heruli.

Jordanes

The work of the Roman/Gothic writer Jordanes, *De origine actibusque Getarum* (The Origin and Deeds of the Getae, of about AD 551), is based on a larger but unfortunately lost work by the Roman statesman F.M.A. Cassiodorus Senator (c. AD 485–c. 585), secretary to Theoderic the Great, King of the Ostrogoths (AD 471–526). The ambition of Theoderic was to give the Goths a great history. As mentioned, Jordanes identifies the Goths with the Geats (in Sweden), probably in order to create his Scandinavian linkage.

Jordanes' work begins with a geographical introduction in which 'the island named Thule' is mentioned, as well as 'a great island named Scandza', both in the Arctic Ocean. Jordanes considers Scandza to be the cradle of the Goths/Geats, 'bursting free from there like a swarm of bees and arriving in Europe' (I.9) (cf. Svennung 1963; 1964; 1974: rather conventional views). This certainly sounds like a topos legend. Jordanes claims that the Goths migrated from Scandza 'a long time ago'; indeed, by his calculation, in '1490 BC' (or the Early Bronze Age in the North!), this being their tribal myth of origin (IV.25). The whole history of the Goths and their migrations has been called into convincing doubt as a literary fiction based on various classical authors (Christensen 2002, with a detailed research history on Jordanes' work). However, this does not rule out the possibility that certain details in Jordanes' work are correct; or, at least, they may yield information on geographical and other knowledge of the Romans in the sixth century AD, the last century before the great transformations of the seventh century, which would see the isolation of Western Europe and the rise of Islam.

Jordanes' Scandza is likely the 'Scatinavia' mentioned already by Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79) in his *Naturalis Historia* (IV.96), the 'known' part of which, according to Pliny, was settled by the 'Hilleviones': as mentioned, likely a misunderstanding or rather a copying error for 'ille(s) viones' (Suiones).

According to Jordanes, Scandza is 'lying in front of the River Vistula', with many and different nations dwelling upon it. Jordanes is quoting Ptolemy, but says that the latter mentions only seven nations on Scandza (III.16–24). Due to the cold, bees are nowhere to be found, Jordanes adds. This is evidently wrong; the note should be seen as a tale about sugar-starved peoples, a tale that certainly would have caught the imagination of the Romans.

In Jordanes' work there now follow several lists of nations, which read like information from several informants, and possibly even

from various time periods. In the northern part of the island (Scandza), where live the (A) *Adogit*, 'there is midsummer sun for forty days and no sun during midwinter' (cf. the tale about the missing bees and Procopius' descriptions above). Jordanes then goes on to mention the (B) *Skridfinns*. 'But still another race dwells there' – namely the (C) *Suehans* [possibly the later Swedes], who have splendid horses; and also those who are trading sapphire-coloured (i.e. blue) skins with the Romans. Incidentally, archaeologically speaking, eastern Central Sweden, in particular Uppland, was on the rise in the period of Jordanes. Then follows a list of (D) peoples from 'fertile lowland country', including 'the *Hallin*' (the etymology might suggest the old Danish province of Halland, today part of southwestern Sweden); 'the *Bergio*' (popular etymology may point to the district of Bjærg in northwesternmost Skåne, as written in its original Danish form, but there are many 'Bjerger' in these landscapes: *bjerg* = 'hill'); and 'the *Liothida*' (popular etymology might make a reference to a district in northwestern Skåne, in its original Danish form 'Lyuthgud', likely referring to Liuthgutha, a fertility goddess). Both districts are prominent tall peninsulas jutting into the Kattegat Sea, like landmarks.

Now follows a list of (E) inland people, 'bold to fight', including *Gautigoths* (very confusing = Geat-Goths!). A list now follows on peoples living like wild animals among rocks turned into 'castles'. Then there is a new list of (G) people 'further away', including the *Ostrogoths* (cf. Östergötland) – *ostro-* is eastern – and the *Raumarici* (cf. the Romarike district in the modern Oslo region); and 'the most gentle *Finns*' (thus, the 'Skridfinns' listed above were probably Lapps/Sami). In classical Roman sources, Finns come out as much less warlike than the Germans.

Finally, after having discussed the (H) *Suitidi*, the *Dani*, and the *Heruli* (see discussions in the paragraphs just below), Jordanes concludes with a list of (I) people 'in the same neighbourhood', including the *Rugi*, who may have already appeared in Tacitus'

Germania as ‘Rugii’, probably referring to the island of Rügen. Confusingly, Procopius mentions the ‘Rogi’ as allies of the Goths, even travelling with them to Italy (cf. ‘Gothic War’ VI.14). So it seems likely that there is a confusion of names here.

Jordanes states that all the people in the neighbourhood of the Danes (Jordanes’ list (H)) were ruled by King Roduulf [‘Advice-Wolf’] (cf. Procopius, ‘Gothic War’ VI.14) ‘before he fled to Theoderic, king of the Goths’ (AD 454–526). In Procopius, Rodolphus (possibly meant to be the same king) was the ruler of the Heruli. Such confusion of names is only one of the many difficulties the reader has to face when attempting to understand the information in the two otherwise highly comprehensive and important texts by Procopius and Jordanes. In terms of the present research goal – the origins of the Danes – the Rodolphus problem is but a minor one.

As to List (H), Jordanes says that ‘the *Suitidi* are of this stock and yet excel the rest in stature. However, the Dani, who trace their origin to the same stock, drove from their [probably referring to the Heruli] homes the Heruli, who are laying claim to pre-eminence among all the nations of Scandza for their tallness.’ Or, in Latin: *Suitidi, cogniti in hac gente reliquis corpore eminentiores: quamvis et Dani, ex ipsorum stirpe progressi, Herulos propriis sedibus expulerunt, qui inter omnes Scandiae nationes nomen sibi ob nimia proceritate affectant praecipuum.*

The *Suitidi* are probably identical with Tacitus’ *Suiones*, as they were coming down through history, fitting smoothly into both regional and historical development. As argued above, the name and term *Suiones* stem from Plinius’s [H]illeviones = *ille/illi(s) viones*. The ‘Su-/Sv-’ should therefore not be taken to indicate a relation with *Svear*/Swedes/Sweden, or the like, as is very often done by philologists and historians alike.

At any rate the quoted expulsion must have happened after the Heruli were settled by the Gaudi, or even before the Heruli appeared on the Continent, if they come from Scandinavia at all! At any rate,

the 'tallness' of the stature of some Germanic Scandinavians seems to have impressed the Romans.

Danes

In much the same way as an early Swedish origin of the Continental Goths must be rejected, on the basis of both written texts and archaeology, an early Migration period origin of the Danes from the Swedes must likewise be rejected. Indeed, even on the basis of Jordanes, there is no reason to believe that the Danes should stem from the Swedes and have arrived in Denmark from northern Central Sweden in or around the Imperial Roman period. Also, archaeology has no observations whatsoever in support of such a hypothesis. Rather a cultural flow is noted in the opposite direction, from south to north. This holds true for Norway as well.

An end therefore ought to be put to the century-long speculations in many historical and archaeological circles (as well as in others) that the Danes arrived from the Swedes. Jordanes' *History of the Goths*, with tales about the Scandinavian roots of the Goths, is a construct, based on older classical sources and some information from Jordanes' own time (Christensen 2002). History invented, as in so many other similar works.

As argued here, the term 'Dani', perceived as a generic one, was probably given to the inhabitants of the Danish islands (and their neighbours) in the later Imperial Roman period, including Tacitus' Sueones and Jordanes' Suetiti. The origin of the term may quite possibly be Latin and related to 'to give'; or, more likely, it is related to Mela's and, later on, Pliny's term of the Bay of Codanus etc. The linguistic incorporation of the Sueones/Suetiti into the Dani may well have started as early as the third century AD, if not earlier, and was certainly finalized by the early sixth century AD at the latest – the century of Jordanes. Certainly, the province of Skåne, the southernmost

part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, with surprisingly few earlier Roman imports, should have been incorporated into the regions of the 'Dani' by then.

The archaeological argument at hand is that the central part of the Old Danish region was in fact the basis of the later Kingdom of Denmark (Randsborg 2011). These areas were already prominent in rich finds from the Bronze Age and earlier and certainly saw many exquisite Roman imports in the Imperial period, in particular the major islands of Sjælland, Fyn and Lolland, even including rich cemeteries through the first three centuries of the Imperial Roman period, before burial rites became more modest in most of Denmark. (For references and illustrations, consult Jensen 2001f., in particular Vol. 4, which represents a fine and fairly recent archaeological survey and discussion; Christensen 1969 and Skovgaard-Petersen *et al.* 1977 discuss the early historical data in detail but their archaeological information is outdated and even misleading, as transpires from Randsborg 1980; 1991; 2008; 2009; 2011; and several other authors.)

Armed conflicts were no doubt common in Germania and certainly ensued between East and West in the Danish region, as the very large military depositions of the later Imperial Roman period (culminating in the broad period around AD 300) seem to demonstrate. These finds are great testimonies to the local weaponry of the age, with only a few foreign artefacts, including a larger number of fine Roman sword blades from the earlier phases, plus some 'fingerprints' pointing to other Nordic regions, including Southern Norway and Central Sweden, Northern Germany, and possibly even the major island of Gotland in the Baltic; the question being, are we dealing with allies or enemies?

The largest military deposits consist of equipment for whole armies of more than 1,000 warriors, and likely far more, including their naval transport. Such costly and conspicuous finds are almost scornful demonstrations, indeed denials by military leaders that they would

use wealth – even wealth conquered – for personal gain; prestige is instead the central issue. Mainly deposited in the north–south seam between east and west in Denmark (the broad zone between the later cities of Århus and Slesvig) (see Fig. 5.2), the military depositions are what remains from clashes between military brotherhoods and regiments akin to Late Roman auxiliaries like the Herul company with its red and white shields mentioned above. Notably, there are no major military depositions on Sjælland, Lolland or the eastern part of Fyn.

The one archaeological question that is still open is: who carried out the depositions – the winners or the losers? Classical sources tend to speak in favour of the winners. Thus, Tacitus in his *Annales* of c. AD 109 (XIII.57) writes of the German Chatti and Hermunduri fighting over a river and some salt resources in AD 58 – actually a vow by the Chatti of a deposition to ‘Mars and Mercury’ of the enemy’s army, when slain and conquered. Orosius, in his *Historiae Adversum Paganos* of c. AD 417 (V.16) relates of the Cimbri of the close of the second century BC (however, more than 500 years before he wrote!) that they deposited weapons and equipment of an enemy Roman army in a river and hanged the captives. The winners would thus be the ones throwing away the weaponry of the losing enemy force into local lakes and bogs, with the added supposition that the battles were taking place in the same region as the depositions. Recently, an idea has gained ground that the depositions reflect ‘triumphs’ on the Roman model – enemy equipment brought back home from campaigns abroad (Jørgensen *et al.* 2003). What speaks against this idea is the lack of civil booty in the ‘triumphs’ of the military deposition in the North.

The military depositions began to disappear around AD 400, when a new social and cultural order was being established. The same phase saw many treasures of artefacts made from costly metals, in particular gold – the spoils of the declining Roman Empire and payments to

German regiments serving with the Romans (like the Heruli) (survey in Geisslinger 1967). But even in the Migration period Jylland was an entity of its own, as demonstrated by the particular westward distribution of the golden D-bracteates of around 500 (Fig. 5.3; cf. Axboe 2007). The large military depositions of the Roman Imperial period are no doubt a reflection of a fundamental east–west antagonism in ‘Denmark’ in the Early Iron Age, as well as later, which was only augmented by the Roman gold brought back by Nordic magnates serving on the Continent in the fourth and fifth centuries. These kleptocrats turned their riches into golden artefacts standardized according to weight, and even into a hack-gold economy, fostering both the rise of estates and a royal stratum. Such societies modelled themselves on the new Germanic kingdoms to the south, apart from still being fiercely pagan.

Most of the gold comes from the Danish islands (plus Bornholm), some is from the adjacent eastern parts of Jylland, while less is from Skåne (Geisslinger 1967). There is also much gold of this period from present-day Sweden. These are also regions with a particular royal presence in later periods, including mayor royal and elite estate centres. Princely graves of the Late Imperial Roman Period are often found at localities owned by the elites of the Middle Age (Randsborg 2011). Notably, Roman gold coins of the period, so-called *solidi*, have survived only where they were turned into trinkets (with a hole for wearing), as on the Baltic islands.

During the sixth to seventh centuries almost no coins of gold, or even of silver, reached the North. In Western Europe there was a pronounced decline in gold during the seventh century due to the crises in the Eastern Empire, fighting first the Persian, then the Islamic Empires. Coins are only reintroduced in Denmark around 700 in the form of small silver *sceattas*, minted at the town of Ribe on the North Sea. The origin of this silver in the West is unclear; perhaps old Roman plate, perhaps silver from new mines being opened. Indirect early



Figure 5.3 Distribution of 'Type D' gold bracteates (with a stylized horse as the main element of decoration). Late fifth century AD

Note the concentration on the Jylland/Jutland Peninsula (in opposition to the Danish Islands).

Source: Axboe 2007

commerce with the looting Islamic realms, in Africa and Spain for instance, is an archaeological unknown but not a wholly unrealistic suggestion (Islamic silver coins only appear in the North at the close of the eighth century, and then in quite large numbers, passing through Russia).

In Denmark, standardized very large and highly productive farmsteads are recorded from the Late Imperial Period onwards (Ethelberg *et al.* 2003, 222ff.; 270ff.; Holst 2010). Some of these are particularly large, a phenomenon already known from earlier periods. Truly new is the establishment of manors and estate centres, called 'aristocratic' in archaeological rhetoric. The earliest such is situated at Gudme on southeastern Fyn, a few kilometres from a large harbour site at Lundeborg, right on the coast of the Greater Belt (Store Bælt), where many traces of craft production have also been found. Gudme is positioned in order to control both the traffic through and the southern crossings of the Store Bælt waterway which makes up the main entrance to the Baltic. If Gudme held a central administrative function on Fyn it would have been positioned in the middle of the island, where the city of Odense is today.

The entire settlement around Gudme is particularly rich in gold finds. Apart from the 'aristocratic' (or royal) farm at Gudme itself, with adjacent ceremonial hall, there are fifty or more large longhouse farmsteads on fenced square and spacious crofts nearby, indeed a whole town at the centre of a densely populated sub-region. Gudme means 'God Home', or home of the gods, clearly implying a ceremonial hall; indeed more than one, since there are other 'God-' place names nearby, which are probably contemporary with it.

Gudme continues to have a role in history, becoming a Viking Age district capital but never again the 'capital' of the island of Fyn and beyond. Manors similar to Gudme are known from the period after AD 400 on Sjælland – east as well as west – in southern Skåne, and even on the island of Bornholm; in other words, in the region of

Tacitus' Suintones and adjacent areas of the Danes to the east. The elite farms in Jylland are, with a few possible exceptions, less conspicuous prior to the Viking Age, with investments being made instead in large villages of standardized longhouse farms on fenced square and spacious – often very spacious – crofts. In conjunction with the main farm of the village, such settlements are in themselves small estates, like the large Vorbasse 'village' in Central Jylland. Throughout Jylland, as elsewhere in the Danish region, the settlement is one of supreme organization and continuity. The sub-regions are well defined by archaeology, in all probability originally corresponding to the 'nations' known from written sources, including Tacitus (Ethelberg *et al.* 2003, 283, Fig. 157; cf. 222, Fig. 93).

Still, this is just one part of the picture.

The English scholar Bede (AD 672/673–735), writing about the Continental invasions of England at the end of the Roman period in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical History of the English People), gives an illustrating example of military and other specifics, and in a well-defined context (I.15):

In the year of our Lord 449, Martian became Emperor with Valentinian, the forty-sixth in succession from Augustus, ruling for seven years. In his time the Angles or Saxons came to Britain at the invitation of King Vortigern in three long-ships [some 100+ warriors only!], and were granted land in the eastern part of the island on condition that they protected the country: nevertheless, their real intention was to subdue it. They engaged the enemy advancing from the north [the Picts?], and having defeated them, sent back news that the country was fertile and the Britons cowardly. Whereupon a larger fleet quickly came over with a great body of warriors, which, when joined to the original forces, constituted an invincible army. These also received from the Britons grants of land where they could settle among them on condition that they maintained the peace and security of the island against all enemies in return for regular pay.

Bede seems quite well informed about all this, even though he was writing nearly 300 years after the events. The reason for the German 'invasion' is of course the retreat of the Roman legions and, some time later, the decline of Roman administration.

In the light of developments on the Jylland peninsula, it is interesting that the Angles participated in the armed invasions of England in the fifth century. In fact, the southern part of the province of Slesvig, including the traditional southern Danish frontier, documented by 800 at the latest on the basis of Continental written sources, and in the seventh century as based on archaeology (the Danevirke walls), is situated in the traditional territory of the Angles, which thus may have come under the domination of the Jutes and the Danes by then.

The archaeological and historical challenge is trying both to integrate and to understand the contents of the many different sources of information of the Late Imperial Roman and the Migration (and later) periods: a West Roman political and military system in flux, threatened by lack of funding due to an eroding settlement and economy, and difficult to tax; by contrast, a stable, even developing North Germanic settlement with expansive technology and economy. The tribal – that is national – politics of this age of Germanic kingdoms is based on the accomplishments of followers, not on tax, as in Rome, but only tribute at most.

Both early and later Germanic nations were involved in military campaigns, in the North accompanied by conspicuous depositions of weapons during the Imperial period up to and around AD 400. Armed expeditions were taking place, but to what degree population units followed suit is an open question, even though military families would have been useful as 'service modules' to the fighters. Nevertheless, the period sees claims of massive changes of populations, though possibly these were merely movements of armies, as linguistic evidence suggests. For instance, the north–south

German–Latin boundary hardly moves southwards after the fall of the Western Empire, suggesting no massive migration of Germans into the former Empire (the situation in England is somewhat different). Finally, multiple changes in religion and organization of religious practices should be considered – important factors to everyone in this period, from low to high – and not least the shifting political entities and realms.

It is scarcely a coincidence that this was also the period when the Danes and the Jutes emerged in various annals for the first time, alongside the Merovingian Franks and other major Continental nations that are countries even today, plus several others that have since vanished – disappearing altogether or becoming part of other nations. The quoted arrival of people from ‘Germania’ in England is but one example of military and other politics ‘abroad’, spelling out both opportunities and conflicts in this so-called Dark Age.

The accompanying question relates to the reasons for the Germanic ‘invasions’ of England, including that of the Angles from Southern Slesvig and the Jutes from Central Jylland, reasons which may be quite banal, such as simply opportunity, or related, for instance, to the expansion of the political power of the Danes. A hundred years after the first invasion of England the Dani were certainly noted as a power to be reckoned with by Procopius.

Notably, throughout the period, the settlement in the whole ‘Old Danish’ region (the High Medieval definition of the geography) is one of growth, irrespective of local political and military affairs. The armies in the North were well fed by settlement and society and were not, like the Germanic armies entering the Empire, the result of a collapse of the same. Archaeologically speaking, Scandinavia was an island of stability in the centuries that saw the collapse of the Roman West, in much the same way as the Roman East saw marked growth right up to the final wars with Persia at the beginning

of the seventh century AD and the following onslaught by the Islamic forces, fed by the weaknesses of the East Roman and Persian empires.

Finally, while under optimal conditions archaeology can provide a clear picture of economy, settlement and local organization of society, well-defined larger cultural groupings and the interaction between these entities throughout the first millennium AD in Northern Europe (as well as elsewhere), the written sources are confusing. The Continental sources (there are no others), from the Later Imperial Period onwards, mainly provide snippets of information on political and military affairs dominated by shifting alliances and floating on and across the generally stable cultural configurations. Thus, it is very difficult to combine these two classes of data: old history and new archaeology. The aim here is to re-evaluate the old in the light of the new.

Towards the Viking Age

The Danes sent a fleet under King Chlochilaich and invaded Gaul from the sea. They came ashore, laid waste one of the regions ruled by Theuderic [died AD 534] and captured some of the inhabitants. They loaded their ships with what they had stolen and the men they had seized, and then set sail for home.

Gregory of Tour, III.3

... he turned his missionary course towards the fierce tribes of the Danes. At that time, so we are told, the Danish ruler was Ongendus [Danish Angantyr], a man more savage than any wild beast and harder than stone, who nevertheless, through divine intervention, received the herald of truth with every mark of honour.

Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi*, 8; events in c. AD 710

Harald king bade be made memorials these after Gorm his father and after Thyra his mother. That Harald who for himself won Denmark all. And Norway. And made the Danes Christian.

Large Jelling Rune Stone, AD 960s

The centuries following the Migration period were no less prominent in Scandinavia, but owing to a conscious avoidance of depositing artefacts in graves of high-ranking personages, the lack of military depositions – and even the lack of treasures made from costly metals – the Old Danish region appears to be poor from the moment the burying of golden treasures ceased after the first four generations from AD 400 on. This picture of poverty is false, however, as the size and riches of the estate centres demonstrate. But a historical fog still hovers over the region, alleviated only by an ever-growing archaeology. Even so, it is still very tempting to integrate archaeology with knowledge from the few – and yet uncertain – written sources. (Again the reader should benefit from Jensen 2001f., Vol. 4; and from Randsborg 1980; 2008; 2009 and 2011, in terms of data, illustrations and, in particular, discussions on historical integration.)

Indeed, recent archaeological excavations of manors, villages and large individual farms of the Migration period – the age of Procopius and Jordanes and later – have corrected the picture of relative poverty dramatically. What is more, from around AD 700 onwards, trading towns with many traces of crafts, notably including mass production, were even beginning to appear. The ninth century AD is still archaeologically ‘poor’, even though the Danes conquered almost the whole of England! Only conspicuous elite rivalry and the dramatic cultural and religious changes of the tenth century provide a final archaeological glimpse of the true riches in a country known to have dominated Northern Europe. Archaeology and history are often an odd couple, even though both are dealing with the same ‘history’. It is

important in both subjects to tread carefully when it comes to methods of studying data, as well as drawing conclusions.

As quoted above, Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79), in his *Naturalis Historia* (IV.96), refers to ‘Codanus’, a mighty bay formed by the huge *Saevo* Mountain (southwestern Norway), and the Cimbrian Peninsula, a bay full of islands, the most famous being ‘Scatinavia’, the known part of which is populated by the *Hilleviones* (likely an error for *ille(s) Viones* = Tacitus’ *Suiones*), occupying ‘500 villages.’ As we have noted with Procopius and Jordanes, the Scandinavian Peninsula, the southernmost part of which is Skåne (Scandia in Latin), is often taken to be an island, just as is the case with ‘Thule’, which is also sometimes confused with ‘Scandinavia’.

Pomponius Mela, in his *De situ orbis libri III*, as also quoted above, also mentions the Bay of ‘Codanus’, but in two separate tales: in the first one it is ‘above the Elbe, full of large and small islands sometimes flooded by the sea’ (III.31f.; III.54f.); in the other it has seven islands, the biggest and most fertile of these being called ‘Codanovia’, or, in another version, ‘Scatinavia’, as in Pliny. Clearly, the latter ‘Codanus’ is the Kattegat/Baltic Sea. Thus the etymology, however uncertain, may have it that the Danes were named after the snaking archipelago between the Kattegat and the western Baltic – *Codanus*, ignoring the prefix (and the suffix). In fact, *coda* (or *cauda*) is Latin for ‘animal tail’, pointing to a Roman origin or translation of the name of the bay. Another way around, and far more doubtful since there is no explanation of this term, the word ‘Dani’ may have its origin in the Latin ‘to give’.

As already mentioned, the Eudoses of Tacitus were the likely forerunners of the later Eutii (English-style pronunciation!) or Jyder (Jutes). Similarly, there is also a link between Tacitus’ *Suiones* and the Dani on the Danish islands (and in the Skåne region), possibly by way of ‘Codanus’, giving its name to Denmark, the dominant force in the political integration of the region. Strangely, apart from the generic

name of the people and later of the nation, Danes are invisible in the place names of the region. Similarly, the various regions and islands hold no reference to peoples, except 'Jylland'. This speaks in favour of a rather late appearance of the term 'Danes', as would perhaps be expected of novel political formations.

As for Jylland, this province is named after the Jutlanders, a generic, perhaps even foreign term for the peoples living on the peninsula, at least north of Angel in South Slesvig. Bede writes the following in his *Ecclesiastical History* about the Continental invasions of England at the end of the Roman period (I.15, for the year AD 449):

These newcomers were from the three most formidable races of Germany, the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes [*Iutae*]. From the Jutes are descended the people of Kent and the Isle of Wight and those in the provinces of the West Saxons opposite the Isle of Wight who are called Jutes [*Iutarum nation*] to this day. From the Saxons – that is, the country now known as the land of Old Saxons – came the East, South and West Saxons. And from the Angles – that is the country known as Angulus, which lies between the provinces of the Jutes and Saxons and is said to remain unpopulated to this day – are descended the East and Middle Angles, the Mercians, all the Northumbrian stock ... and the other English peoples [Bede was himself from Northumbria].

Indeed, this is an illustrative example of Migration period myths of whole populations being shifted.

Again, archaeology may assist in several matters, including elite communication. As outlined above, around and after AD 400 Scandinavia sees a large number of exquisite gold finds in local styles but probably made in Roman gold paid to Germanic and other rulers and armies operating on the Continent. The heavy gold horns from Gallehus in southwestern Jylland are well-known examples. The joint weight of the horns (one is missing the end) is about seven kilograms, or 1,600 *solidi*, equalling the annual payment for 200 professional Roman soldiers, or about half a million litres of wheat (bought within

the Empire). One of the horns carries a famous stanza in runes, even including alliteration, an echo of courtly poetry of the age; in translation most likely: 'I Lægæst: Son of Holt: The horn: Made'. Large golden necklaces for men are also known, often in advanced filigree; fine swords were decorated in gold.

In the fifth and early sixth centuries many gold bracteates were produced in the North, modelled on Late Roman medallions, but in local styles (Axboe 2007). The archaeological 'visibility' of the bracteates is dependent on their rare occurrence in female graves (merely in Southern Norway, particularly the southwestern parts, in England and on the Continent) and in hoards – hidden family heirlooms (mainly in Denmark and the Västergötland–Bohuslen provinces, plus the Baltic islands).

Some, often early types of bracteates (traditional Type A) comprise specimens decorated with only a head and breast; these are close to the Roman prototypes. A common type of bracteate with a human head and long 'Merovingian' hair placed on a semi-naturalistic representation of a horse (traditional Type C) is rare in Jylland, but common on the Danish islands and in Skåne, as well as elsewhere. By contrast, a slightly later type of gold bracteate, with only a stylised horse (traditional Type D), is common in Jylland but rare to the east. This type is also found in England. The bracteates thus demonstrate continuing differentiation between east and west in Denmark, as well as particular links, probably along elite marriage lines, between Denmark and other Scandinavian regions, as well as between Jylland, Frisia and southern England, in line with Bede's tale above.

The development of the political geography in Denmark in the latter half of the first millennium AD is rather unclear from the written Continental sources. A Danish King called Chochilaicus is mentioned by Gregory of Tours (c. AD 538–94) in his *History of the Franks* (III.3) for the year c. AD 515, as leading an attack by sea on Frisia. King Hygelac in the *Beowulf* epic (of the early Viking Age) seems to have

been modelled on this Chochilaicus in terms of his name, but is king of the Geats in the epic, not of the Danes. (The Danish king in Beowulf is Hrothgar, residing in the hall of Hjort [Hart] in 'Scedeland', which may be supposed to be Sjælland/Zealand.)

Even though written Continental sources on the North are virtually non-existent around AD 600, there is no doubt about contact between England and Scandinavia, as evident from the splendid Scandinavian-styled weaponry in the famous Sutton Hoo royal ship burial of c. AD 625, found near Ipswich in East Anglia (Evans 1986). Sutton Hoo is a final piece of evidence of the 'old world', before the collapse of the Roman East in the mid-seventh century and the rise of Islam. Apart from supreme Scandinavian-styled weapons, Sutton Hoo held costly artefacts from Ireland, France and the Eastern Roman Empire, including Egypt. These last were 100-year-old gifts decorated with Christian symbols, no doubt arriving from the Emperor to imagined client kingdoms in the West right up until the final wars between the Romans and the Persians. Further wars then followed with Islamic forces that finally broke the financial backbone of the Romans, who were then pushed back to 'fortress Constantinople', the southern Balkans and western Anatolia, plus some other parts of the former Roman Empire in the west.

The English scholar Alcuin (AD 730s/740s–804 in his *Vita Willibrordi* ('Life of St Willibrord') (9–10) provides the following information about the saint (c. AD 658–739) and the latter's journey to the Danes in about AD 710:

He [Willibrord] turned his missionary course towards the fierce tribes of the Danes. At that time, so we are told, the Danish ruler was Ongendus [Angantyr in Danish, *tyr* is bull], a man more savage than any wild beast and harder than stone, who nevertheless, through divine intervention, received the herald of truth with every mark of honour. But when the latter found that the people were steeped in evil practices, abandoned to idolatry and indifferent to any hope of a better life, he

chose thirty boys from among them and hastily returned with them to the chosen people of the Franks . . .

Willibrord returned from Ongendus directly to Frisia (via the North Sea island of Heligoland). This would indicate that Ongendus was master of a part of Jylland, at least, if not of all Denmark. The township of Ribe is known to have been in existence around AD 700 (with workshops and even a mint), while the long walls of Danevirke at the later city of Slesvig, erected across the foot of Jylland against attacks from the South, saw their fourth phase in AD 737 (dendro-date) (Hellmuth Andersen 2004). The first three phases of Danevirke are carbon-14-dated to around AD 650+.

Jylland was brought to renewed attention in connection with the late seventh-century economic development in Western Europe (including ports of manufacturing and trade), the challenge of Christianity, and the political and military pressures from the Continent. All these elements would call for integration of the Danish region, if this had not already happened earlier – as indicated by the appearance of the Danish King Chochilaicus a couple of hundred years before Ribe and the Danish King Ongendus. The decline in military depositions in the early fifth century AD may well provide a date for the political integration of at least the central regions of the country. The same date is given by the contemporary rise of new settlements with very big farms, even manors, as nodes in a new nation-carrying estate system that would reach into the Danish Middle Ages (post-Viking Age) and even beyond.

According to Frankish sources of the period, there seems to have been only one royal lineage in the country. The Danish scholar Saxo Grammaticus (c. AD 1160–1208+), archiepiscopal scribe, administrator and historian, in his *Gesta Danorum* (Accomplishments of the Danes) knows of no other nation, past or present, on the then territory of 'Denmark' around AD 1200. Saxo relates many tales about the distant

past: some wandering stories; some no doubt 'real'. Interestingly, he places archaeological types of monuments and artefacts in the correct chronological order in the sixteen 'books' of his work and may have done the same regarding some of the true historical elements, even though the earlier parts of the work, in particular, are clearly borrowed, transformed and invented; indeed, they are often inspired by Continental sources (Lukman 1943).

Around AD 800, the Danish kings were opponents of the Franks (Christensen 1969; Albrechtsen 1976). During Charlemagne's expansion towards the North in the late eighth century AD a Saxon lord is known to have sought exile (in 777) with Danish King Sigfred. In 804 we hear about Danish King Godfred ('GodPeace!') negotiating with Charlemagne near Slesvig ('Sliestorp') 'on the frontier with Saxony'. Frankish attacks across the River Elbe in 808 promoted counter strikes by King Godfred on Slavonian allies of the Franks; from the town of Reric (in Mecklenburg) Godfred abducted the traders only to settle them at Sliestorp. Similarly, Godfred and his sons dominated the Oslo Fjord region with the emporium of Kaupang in rich Vestfold, the western province of the region. In the same year, 808, King Godfred improved the Danevirke longwalls across the foot of Jylland (Jutland). In 810 Godfred landed in Friesland with '200 ships', extracting 100 pounds in silver in tribute and boasting that he would attack Charlemagne in Aachen, but was soon after murdered by his armed followers ('*hird* men').

Peace negotiations took place in 811 between twelve named Frankish counts and twelve Danish lords at a location near the River Ejder – the traditional frontier between German held Holsten (Holstein) and Danish Slesvig – and involved two brothers of the new Danish King Hemming. On the Danish side there were even three Asfrids, one of these being 'of Skåne' (Scania) in the east, which indicates that Skåne was also part of Denmark. The question remains, however, as to what extent and degree the many different provinces of

'Denmark' were integrated, even when they had one and the same nominal ruler. Although united by the sea, old Denmark, in its various editions, made up a vast country.

Two reliable travelogues published in King Alfred of Wessex's (reigned 871–99) edition of *Historiarum adversum paganos libri septem* by the Roman Paulus Orosius (c. AD 375–418+) are important. The first is by a Norwegian called Ottar, sailing from Kaupang to Hedeby ('belonging to the Danes') at Slietorp in five days. Leaving Kaupang, Ottar had Denmark on the port side for three days and to starboard the open sea. This description seems to indicate that the Oslofjord area, Bohuslen and Halland belonged to Denmark, the term Norway ('North Way') then being restricted mainly to the long Atlantic coast (in the Middle Ages only Halland belonged to Denmark). On the last two days of the journey Ottar had Jylland (and Slesvig) on the starboard side as well as 'many islands,' adding that the Anglii (of South Slesvig) used to live there before arriving in England. On the port side he had 'the islands belonging to Denmark.'

The second travelogue is by an Anglo-Saxon called Wulfstan, sailing from Hedeby to Truso on the Wistula estuary in seven days. He had Vendland (Slavonians) to starboard, all the way to Wisla, and Langeland, Lolland, Falster and Skåne (Scania) to port: 'all these lands belong to Denmark.' Wulfstan then mentions Bornholm, also on the port side, which 'has its own king,' an interesting statement. After Bornholm Blekinge, Möre (southeastern Småland opposite Öland), Öland and Gotland are named, also to port but hardly sighted en route to Truso in seven days; Wulfstan adds that 'these lands (the latter ones) belong to the Swedes.'

While Danish kings appear in Frankish sources as early as the beginning of the sixth century AD, 'Denmark,' as a geographical term, only begins to appear in Viking Age sources (actually as late as around AD 900). 'Danish' would seem to refer to people speaking a Danish language, irrespective of their province of origin. If ruled by a Danish

king, such provinces might be considered a 'Denmark.' To judge by the cited travelogues from around 900, Denmark is (at least) the naval region stretching from southeastern Norway to Skåne and encompassing the Danish Isles; the latter are probably the ancient core lands of the Danes, as observed by archaeology (Randsborg 2011).

The political development in Denmark of the tenth century AD is particularly interesting (Randsborg 2008). Jylland, bordering the North Sea, became a potential target for Frankish and later on (AD 843) for German expansion, which had already brought northern Germanic nations, including the Frisians, into the Christian fold. In the East, pagan Slavonian principalities (with highly efficient agricultural practices) were shaping the defensive political landscape of the southern shores of the western Baltic, almost all the way to the foot of Jylland and the Danevirke walls.

German pressure was felt in Denmark at the time of the Ottonian dynasty, the southern borderlands of Jylland being attacked by Imperial armies several times (including in 934 and 974). The Danevirke walls – always facing south – were strengthened anew, and a forward wall ('Kovirke') was built. In the end, German Christianity was accepted as the state religion, as evident from King Harald's huge rune stone from the 960s, erected at his important estate and royal burial ground at Jelling in Central Jylland. Jelling is, in terms of common geography, situated 'out in the middle of nowhere', even though centrally in Jylland and on the main north–south highway through the peninsula (cf. below, Epilogue Fig. 6.1).

King Harald's father was King Gorm, who erected a rune stone of standard size at Jelling to his wife, Queen Thyra, Harald's mother. This Gorm (a rare name in runic inscriptions) is perhaps identical with a named 'Gorm' who arranged for the Danish Queen Asfrid Odinkardatter's rune stone at the large town of Hedeby on the frontier, in memory, as it says, of King Sigtryg, her son with King

Gnupa, son of Olaf, who came ‘in arms’ from ‘Sveonien’ (likely an echo from ‘Suiones’, rather than Sweden). This piece of information comes from Adam of Bremen, in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* (Deeds of Bishops of the Hamburg Church) of 1075+; and Adam seems to have known of Tacitus. Gnuba is (according to Widukind, c. 925–973+, in his *Res gestae saxonicae sive annalium libri tres* (The Deeds of the Saxons, or Three Books of Annals)) the Danish king who was defeated (and baptized) by the German King Heinrich in 934, while Adam reports that it was King Gorm (‘Vurm’). According to Adam, Sigtryg was dethroned by Hardegon (= Gorm?).

These magnates and prominent women may well have belonged to the same larger kin-group; thus, Svend’s son Hardegon [Hardeknud?] – Gorm – Harald – Svend [‘Forkbeard’] – Knud the Great (‘Canute’), etc. There is a gap in the Continental written sources from the mid/late ninth century to the early tenth century on kings in Denmark, possibly indicating an absence of armed and other conflict. In the same broad period there is much more information on Danish kings and armies in Western Europe, in particular in England (Albrectsen 1976; Lund 1997).

King Harald erected a truly huge and very famous rune stone at Jelling as part of a large, ‘high-fenced’, even fortified ritual complex. The ritual area includes two enormous mounds (one with a pagan burial chamber of the tenth century AD, while the other is a slightly later cenotaph). An enormous ship setting, exactly 1,200 Roman feet long, more rune stones, and a wooden church are also part of the complex. The inscription on King Harald’s stone hails his parents (King Gorm and Queen Thyra), and refers to ‘that Harald who won for himself all Denmark, and Norway, and made the Danes Christian’. In fact, Harald’s particular powerbase may well have been Jylland, from which his sub-dynasty held sway over ‘Denmark’ (the Danish islands, Skåne and northern lands on the Kattegat and even in

southeastern Norway), as well as 'Norway' (here taken to be the very long Atlantic coast of today's country of the same name).

Jelling's particular status was rather short-lived, even though the locality gave its name both to the local county and to the local district. Saxo Grammaticus in the late twelfth century only mentions the locality of Jelling once in his important work, and then merely in connection with the very distant past of the country. He does, though, acknowledge the existence of a royal farmstead at Jelling (*Gesta Danorum* IV.3.4).

The western parts of Denmark of the tenth century AD have revealed many conspicuous grave finds, including those of 'Hungarian style' heavy cavalry in full gear and with all possible weapons, as well as truly high-ranking women buried in fine wagon boxes; many noteworthy rune stones; architecturally and elegantly designed huge ring fortresses of the famous 'Trelleborg' type; early towns; and even long wooden two-lane bridges. Indeed, from these finds it would seem that Denmark was founded in and from the west, not from the east, as was suggested above when discussing the evidence from classical Roman and later authors. In fact, even the present author has previously suggested a west-to-east progression of this particular 'state formation' (Randsborg 1980). Under the older, though still unconventional hypothesis, eastern Denmark would have been brought into 'Denmark' under the tenth-century 'Jelling dynasty', which even holds a direct bloodline to the present Queen Margrethe of Denmark.

An alternative theory is that male members of the Jelling dynasty, including King Gorm, Harald's father, were in fact 'coup generals', even with family links to an ancient Danish royal line, possibly merely through marriage. King Gorm, for instance, may have married Queen Thyra in order to move closer to the actual line of descent. The common tenth-century rune stones from Central Jylland, unusually often erected for women, including one for the mother of King

Harald's wife Tove, may support such a hypothesis. Tove was the daughter of a Danish-born queen to a West Slavonian ruler, Mistive in eastern Holstein.

Danish royal property comes in two forms in the Middle Ages: that which belonged to the royal family, headed, of course, by the king himself – the 'patrimonium' – and that which accompanied the responsibilities of being the ruling king – the 'kongeleiv', meaning the king's landed property and other rights (Andrén 1983; 1985) (Figs. 5.4 and 5.5). Most of the former are in the form of estates to the west in Denmark, while the latter are in the form of estates in the east of the country (admittedly there are no full records to build on, only occasional documents, even then mostly of the early thirteenth century AD). At first, these observations would seem to confirm the above west-to-east model. On the other hand, the observations may also be cited in favour of the 'coup general' model, with the original dynasty, based on Sjælland in older times, winning new properties in the west 'for themselves' (consider the claim on King Harald's rune stone at Jelling). 'State formation' is, of course, very much about control over resources – in fact land and people – rather than over tribute and taxation, as in the Early Roman Empire, for instance, or in pristine Germanic Iron Age societies.

In fact, the rune stones may refer exactly to such a situation, marking and fortifying non-traditional transfers of property and titles among members of the elite, at first in Central, then in North Jylland, later on in Skåne, and finally on the island of Bornholm in the Baltic. The standard formula is 'X erected this stone after Y', implying that X is taking property, rights, etc. from the deceased Y. Sjælland has virtually no rune stones. The ones on Fyn are mostly quite early and may refer to a similar process with origins in the early Viking Age. Indeed, Fyn sees a surprising number of major estates belonging to the patrimonium (Andrén 1985, 74 Fig. 34).

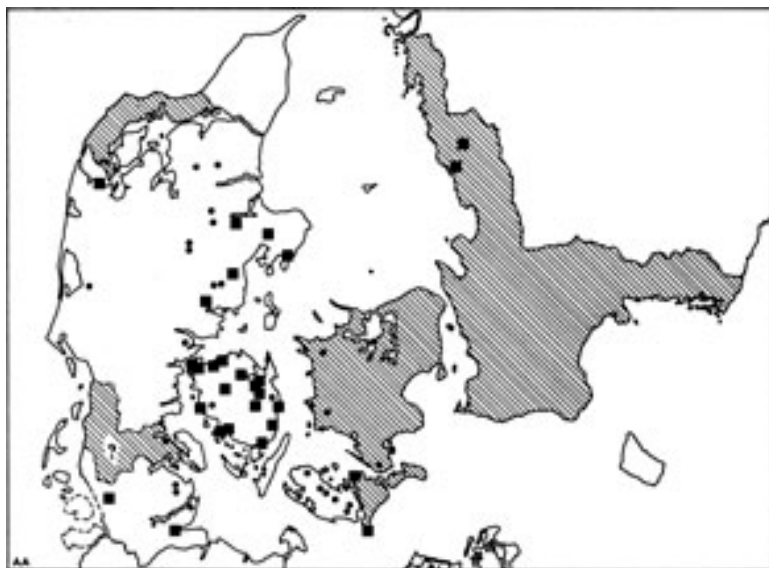


Figure 5.4 Distribution of the two types of royal estates in Denmark in the Viking Age/early Middle Ages

The list is incomplete, even for central Sjælland, but nevertheless displays an important difference between east (Sjælland and the Skåne countries) and west (Jylland, Fyn, Lolland etc.) in the country.

Large black squares = documented estates/estate centres owned by the Danish royal lineage by AD 1230, the so-called patrimonium (patrimony); small black dots = likely patrimonium estates/estate centres; striated areas = areas with documented royal estates of the 'Kongelev' type by AD 1230, usually at least one such estate per Herred (district).

'Kongelev' estates are properties at the disposition for the ruling King of Denmark. Patrimonium estates (or supposed patrimonium estates) are common in the west but almost lacking in the east. By contrast, Kongelev estates occur commonly in the east. A third system may have existed on the island of Bornholm in the Baltic, with the king drawing directly on the resources ('tribute'). Such a system may either be archaic, or stem from 'conquest' (as in the case of the former Slavonian islands of Fehmern and Rügen: cf. Fig. 5.5).

Source: Andrén 1983; 1985



Figure 5.5 Detailed distribution of the documented 'Kongeleiv' estates in Denmark during the Viking Age/early Middle Ages

Striated areas = districts with *no* known Kongeleiv estates; dotted areas = whole districts that are Kongeleiv

Source: Andrén 1983 (cf. Fig. 5.4)

On the other hand, the references to orderly transfers of property and titles on the rune stones may indicate an attempt at moving towards a civil society where 'coup general' ways of thinking are not the norm. At the same time, we can observe changes in the settlement, which is 'frozen' in one location with great respect for plots and fences. In terms of commerce, the tenth century sees a complete abandonment of traditional hack-silver for a monetary economy, even though most of the coins were still foreign, at first Islamic, then German, with a substantial number of English coins from the period of Danish rule at the beginning of the eleventh century. Monopoly coinage only comes later, with greater royal minting and fiscal control. By contrast, the Viking raids on England (and France) brought very few English coins

back to Denmark, the money evidently being spent abroad, including on estates, as indicated by Scandinavian place names such as Derby (Deer Village) and Rugby (Rye Village).

No doubt Jylland was very important in the tenth century AD, if only as the province closest to the temptations and dangers of Western Europe, in particular Germany. Thus, it may seem that the kingdom of Medieval Denmark developed from there, protected by the sea and the Danevirke walls to the south, and governed from Jelling, sitting almost like a spider in the middle of a web of roads with towns as nodes. However, the Slavonian uprising in AD 983 against the Germans drove the latter nation back across the Elbe, indirectly permitting a Danish expansion and leading eventually to a conquest of 'England all' in the early eleventh century. Certainly, by the early eleventh century – as well as later, for instance at the time of Saxo – it was again the riches of the east of the country that were truly counting, just as in later prehistory, as we have seen above, the pendulum would swing back once more to the centre.

At the conclusion of this long journey from Tacitus and even earlier to the High Middle Ages, tracing the origins of the Danes and several other matters, our final observations are to underline the difficulties involved in writing early history on the basis of written texts only, in particular if these are few, uncertain and scattered. Archaeology is a great and essential help, not least in establishing a particular kind of reality, however mute, as in the case of the many Roman imports to Northern Europe. Surprisingly perhaps, local coins are less of a help for most of the Viking Age since they do not carry royal images and names before AD 1000, even though minting had started in Denmark 300 years earlier, in the emporium and later city of Ribe right on the North Sea, linking Jylland with Western Europe.

Archaeology will always be devoid of the emotionally appealing, and indeed the factual properties of a human voice calling from beyond technology, economy, symbolic ideology and contexts placed

in geographical space. Still, it is to archaeology that we should ultimately turn our attention regarding ancient history, just as we are doing when dealing with the distant archaeological ‘history of prehistory’, far beyond the days and writings of Tacitus. The great advantage of archaeology is of course that there is ever-growing data, even dramatically so, in stark contrast to the limitations in the amounts of written sources concerning the distant past, which remain virtually the same.

Note

- 1 Cf. Gaius Plinius Secundus, Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79), in his *Naturalis Historia* IV.XIII.94f.: his Hilleviones of 500 villages = ‘ille/illi(s) viones’ = ‘those suiones’.

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Epilogue: The First Millennium AD in Denmark

Words and Things

Haralter KunukR bað kaurua Kubl ðausi aft Kurm faður sin

Auk aft ðaurui Muður sina

Sa Haraltr ias saR uan Tanmaurk ale auk Nuruiak

Auk Tani karði Kristna

King Harald's rune stone at Jelling, c. AD 965

'Denmark' in the first millennium AD is an appealing challenge, seemingly easy to discuss in medieval hindsight but difficult when it comes to archaeology and forever complicated in terms of the written sources.¹

The earliest written sources are Roman. They describe the North and the Baltic region of the first century AD as fiction: invented place names and names of nations. Only in a very few cases are there realities behind them, as in Aeningia = Bornholm (cf. Henning district, with Sorte Muld – the royal seat in the Later Iron Age) or Cape Rusbeae = Rusnae in Lithuania (doubtless reported by Nero's amber merchant). Names such as Codanus Bay, the western Baltic (cf. *coda/cauda* = animal tail in Latin) were accepted by later writers and transformed into Dan/Dani and Danmark. The Danish islands were settled by the *Ille/Illy(s) Viones* (Pliny), 'The Strong Ones', termed 'Sviones' in *shorthand* by Tacitus, in turn being misconceived for 'Sveer' by later academics.

The Cimbrian Peninsula is Jylland but has hardly anything to do with the Cimbri, who were long gone by the time they were reinvented at the time of Augustus when Roman navies were operating in the North Sea. 'Jyder' (Jutes) figure in Tacitus as Eudoses (cf. the later Eutii = Iutii in Bede (died 735) and Eotan in *Beowulf*). Eudoses should mean 'The Wet Ones' in Latin (cf. *udos*). 'Angler' is 'Those in the Corner' (Anglii). Conveniently, we have three archaeological regions in Jylland in the Imperial Roman Period: 'Kimbrer' – if one prefers – to the north, 'Jyder' in the middle and 'Angler' to the south. A group in northern Slesvig was eaten up by jyder. Even in the Migration Period Jylland is an entity of its own, as demonstrated by the distribution of the golden D-bracteates. The large military depositions from the north-south seam between Jylland and the islands no doubt reflect a fundamental east-west antagonism in the Early Iron Age, as well as later, only augmented by the Roman gold brought back by Nordic magnates in the fourth and fifth centuries. These kleptocrats even turned the riches into a hack-gold economy fostering the rise of estates and a royal stratum, which otherwise modelled itself on the new Germanic kingdoms to the south, apart from still being pagan.

Danish kings are mentioned as aggressors by Frankish sources of the early sixth century. The Dani occur in Jordanes in c. 551 along with Suitidi (derived from Tacitus' Suiones) and Heruli ('Hærulve' = 'Army Wolves'). The Heruls are said to have been driven from the area of the Danes, but are otherwise known as Roman auxiliary regiments (even their shield ornaments are known). They appear, alongside the Goths, in the Black Sea region in the third century (and slightly later in the Roman West). They disappear from the written sources in the period of Jordanes. The century around AD 600 remains rather unclear, but the Sutton Hoo grave from c. 625 demonstrates Late Eastern Imperial contacts with distant Western Europe as well as English contacts with Scandinavia.

Around 710 the English Saint Willibrord met with the Danish King Angantyr, perhaps at Ribe. Several Danish kings, including

Godfred, are known from the first part of the ninth century. Peace negotiations took place on the River Ejder in 811 between twelve Frankish and twelve Danish magnates, including two brothers of King Hemming; the Danish delegation held three Asfrids, one of these 'of Skåne', which seems to demonstrate that Skåne (Scania) was part of the realm.

'Danmark' appears in the written sources around 900, including the famous travelogues of Ottar and Wulfstan. Here Danmark comprises the Islands and Skåne–Halland, and even the Oslo Fjord region. King Harald's rune stone at Jelling, from the 960s, celebrates 'That Harald who won for himself all Denmark; and Norge . . .'. Perhaps we are dealing with a family of royal 'coup generals' comprising Svend's søn Hardegon (Hardeknud?) – Gorm – Harald – Svend ('Tveskæg') etc., originally arriving from Nortmannia (according to Svend Estridssøn's account rendered by Adam of Bremen more than 100 years later), but doubtless married into the ancient Danish royal lineage. Nortmannia is perhaps Normandy but more likely Norway.

King Gorm (a rare name in runic inscriptions) is perhaps identical with the Gorm who arranged for Danish Queen Asfrid Odinkardatter's Hedeby rune stone in memory of King Sigtryg, her son with King Gnupa, son of Olaf, who came 'in arms' from 'Sveonien' (likely Sweden, but we cannot be certain – Tacitus' Suiones may still be a ghost in Adam). Gnuba is (according to Widukind) the Danish king who is defeated (and baptized) by the German King Heinrich in 934, while Adam reports that it was King Gorm ('Vurm'). According to Adam, Sigtryg was dethroned by Hardegon (= Gorm?). These magnates and prominent women may well have belonged to the same kin. Certainly, they owned properties in several regions and countries, as in the case of Tove, daughter of Slavonian King Mistivoj, wife to Harald (Bluetooth). With a Nordic first name, Tove's mother was doubtless Nordic too and certainly owned land in Sønder Vissing in Jylland, where the daughter's rune stone for her mother was erected.

At any rate, the royal Danish lineage at the time of King Harald appears to have dominated the Islands, the western Skåne countries (and the bay of Oslo), plus the Northern Way, Norway's long Atlantic coast, called 'Saevo' by Roman authors a millennium earlier (wild or, in correct Latin, *saevus*). The reason for the presence of royal power in Jylland is no doubt German pressure, attacks in 934 and 974 and the halting Danish acceptance of German Christendom as a royal and state religion in the 960s, followed by the minting of cross coins and the building of churches.

Danish crown lands of the early Middle Ages demonstrate a difference between patrimony, owned by the royal lineage, and 'kongeleiv', owned by the ruling king. The patrimony is mainly to the west – the newer parts of Denmark – while 'kongeleiv' is mainly to the east – the old centre of Denmark since the Bronze Age, and certainly during the Roman Imperial, period to judge from the many Roman bronze vessels, glasses, etc. in the graves of the Islands. Jylland and Slesvig-Holstein, much closer to the Empire, have only a few such items, as is the case with Skåne (there are many more on Bornholm and Gotland).

The prestigious Roman artefacts should be seen as symbols of personal links with the Empire, based no doubt on supplies of auxiliary troops (*hærvulve*); certainly the artefacts are not common trade goods. The Hoby grave on Lolland should be expected to belong to a 'colonel' or even a 'brigadier general', a leader of the Island Danish fighters, in demand after the Roman defeat in the Teutoburg Forest in AD 9. In this light the eventual eastern Danish royal estates and the later Iron Age, from Gudme on Fyn, even Dankirke near Ribe, to Sorte Muld in the east, appear as logical consequences of the outlined development and antagonisms.

The traditional definition of the Viking Age is supported by written sources, including the first known attacks on England around 800 and the final major one in 1066. Archaeological finds were seen as confirmations of this: in Norway the famous Viking ships from the

ninth and tenth centuries; in Sweden the large graveyard at Birka beginning around 800; graves at Hedeby from the ninth to tenth centuries; Jelling's rune stones and huge mounds of the tenth century; the Ladby find from around 900; and Trelleborg from around 1000, completing the list of super finds.

Much has changed during later years, when even traditional subjects like animal styles and runic alphabets have suggested a lower terminus around 700, as does the settlement, including the first 'towns' including the port of Ribe, which even had early minting. Large constructions such as the Danevirke and the Kanhave Channel on Samsø are also dated to 700, or even earlier.

We have an early Viking Age from the close of the seventh century, parallel to the Carolingian period on the Continent, with new industry (and mass production), commerce and trading towns. The large Viking raids on Western Europe occur when the first wave of Islamic silver at around 800 is dwindling. The attacks may well be a reaction to the decrease in eastern trade with the Caliphate, then the largest economy beyond China. At any rate, the attacks cease after around 890 – historians would say because of the Viking defeat at Löwen in Belgium, while archaeologists may point to the arrival of the second and much larger wave of Islamic silver, which, however, also began to dwindle around 950. It is significant that almost no early West European coins returned with the Vikings, the money being spent in England and France, in particular on land, as place names such as Derby and Rugby indicate.

There are no princely tombs in Denmark from the eight to ninth centuries, indicating that the traditional pagan society was functioning in much the same way as it had done since the third century, in spite of mighty kings abroad as well as at home. In the early tenth century at first the Olaf dynasty, then the Jelling one delineated a new cultural geography in Denmark: rich graves for heavy cavalry, wagon box graves for prominent women, fortified towns, impressive Trelleborg fortresses, and the large Ravnninge Bridge south of Jelling (Fig. 6.1).

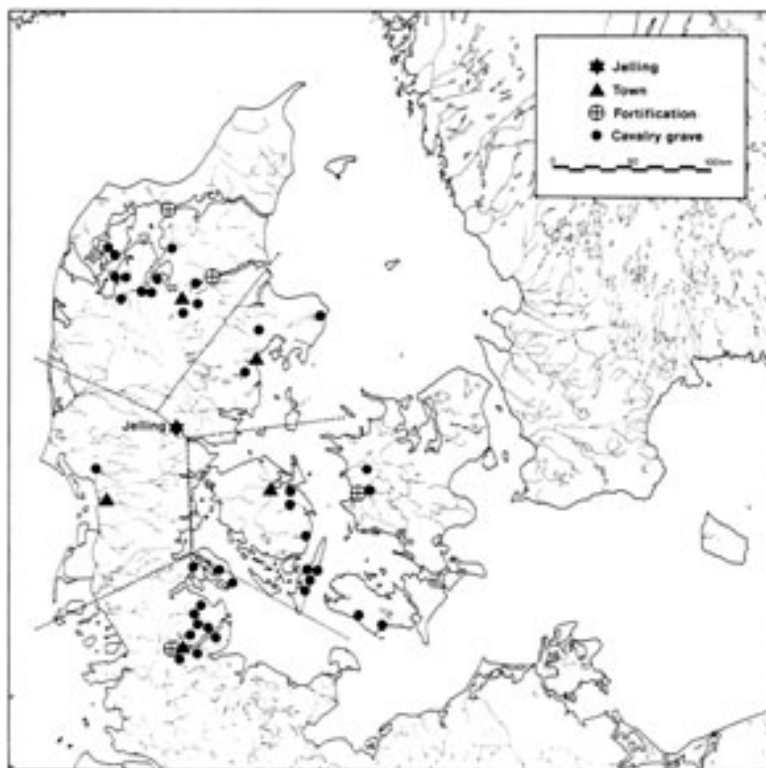


Figure 6.1 Denmark in the tenth century AD

Particular features in the western provinces are marked, including the royal centre and burial ground at Jelling (Kings Gorm and Harald), and major towns, some fortified. The ‘fortification’ at Slesvig in South Jylland represents the Danevirke walls; the other fortifications are ring-forts of the Trelleborg type. The cavalry graves all have heavy stirrups (and bits), plus weaponry, most likely representing officers and magnates in royal service with the Jelling dynasty.

The centre of gravity of Denmark, ever since the Bronze Age (and even earlier), is the islands (with adjacent areas in easternmost Jylland and western Skåne). Thus the particular western or Jylland geography centred on Jelling in the middle to late part of the tenth century is unique and probably related to political and military pressures from Germany.

Source: Author

As demonstrated by the activities at Danevirke, it was all a matter of securing the western province of Denmark.

Rune stones were erected for dead persons, but they should not be seen as simple gravestones. Their 'behaviour' is too strange for that: they occur in the same region only for one or two generations then march on. No doubt their occurrence was closely linked with the political development, being a sort of deeds on stone fortifying new relations, as with our theory of 'coup generals'. The formula 'X erected this stone for Y' – standard on Late Viking Age rune stones – should therefore be read as 'X inherited Y's estate and position'. The rune stones indicate the arrival of forms of inheritance challenging the 'coup general' way of thinking about society, in terms both of property and of titles. In the ninth century rune stones occur in the central areas of Denmark, mostly on the Danish Islands. In the tenth century they are occurring at Hedeby (battles!) and in the central and northern parts of Jylland, including the region of Jelling. By 1000 they are being erected in North Jylland and in South Skåne. The last rune stones are from Bornholm at the time of King Svend Estridsson.

After the Germans were pushed back by the great Slavonian uprising in 983, the international stage was prepared for the appearance of kings of the Jelling dynasty, Svend and Knud (Canute) (the Great), as 'coup generals' in England. Thereupon Jelling and even Jylland began to lose their former position. The attacks on England were followed by the Danegeld payments. Since it is less clever to pay both taxes to the English king and dues to the Danish one, the latter takes over the throne of England. Hardeknud (died 1042) was the last Danish king in England. His successor in Denmark was a Norwegian 'coup general', Magnus the Good, who was followed by Svend Estridsson (sister's son to Knud den Stores, 1047–74).

The Viking Age saw weak military governments, however limited this picture may be. During the tenth century Denmark moved from a hack-silver economy to a coin one, even though most of the coins

were still foreign; at first Islamic, then German. The English Danegeld is noted in the silver hoards from around 1000. At about the same time the settlements become fixed, which seems to reflect 'fence regulated' conditions of ownership. During the period of Svend Estridsson a cultural geography was established for 'Denmark all', with cities, towns and parish villages distributed 'systematically' across the mediaeval territory of Denmark, from Slesvig, Ribe, Århus, Viborg (and 'North Jylland'), over Odense and Roskilde to Lund in the east.

Thus concluded the Viking Age, and the first millennium AD.

Note

- 1 *Bibliographical note.* K. Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark: The Formation of a State*. London/New York 1980 (Duckworth/St Martin's); K. Randsborg, *The Anatomy of Denmark: Archaeology and History from the Ice Age to the Present*. London 2009/2011 (Duckworth/Bristol Classical Press). Plus references in the previous bibliographies.

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